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THE
GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

We must preach more upon the great texts of the Scriptures, the tremendous passages whose vastnesses almost terrify us as we approach them.

J. H. JOWETT.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE" "THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND "THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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PREFACE

THE purpose of these volumes is to direct attention to the value for the pulpit of the great texts of the Bible, and to offer a full exposition of these texts, illustrated throughout.

There is, first, a short introduction to each text, bringing it into relation with its context, and giving the circumstances which led to its utterance. Its contents are, next, arranged in order, so that the leading thought or thoughts may be made prominent, and each subordinate topic may receive its proper place and value. Then comes an exposition of the contents of the text, expressed in good modern English, and illustrated throughout.

Thus the preacher is not supplied with a ready-made sermon, but with materials for a sermon. And in some cases the exposition and illustration of the text will furnish materials for more sermons than one. This is what we need. "The first qualification for writing a sermon," says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, "is that you should have something to say. For this purpose," he adds, "a man must have material at command. It is better to realise this necessity, even though it should lead you to discover how small your stock of material is, than that you should indulge in indolent self-complacency, and should attempt to spin something out of nothing."

The illustrations are new. That is to say, none of them have been taken from any existing store or collection of illustrations. Some of them have never before been in print.

They have been sent to the Editor by friends and correspondents all over the world out of their own experience. If they should be considered too numerous, let it be remembered that the preacher is certainly not expected to use them all, but to make his choice among them. Their number will encourage or even compel him to make every sermon his own.

Nothing in the world is easier than to gather illustrations of a kind and dot the sermon with them. Nothing is more difficult than to find the illustration that really illustrates and to bring it in pointedly at the very place where it is required. The attempt has been made to render that service in these volumes.

It is proposed to cover the whole Bible in five years, issuing four volumes annually. The volumes for 1910–1911 will be Isaiah, St. Mark, Genesis to Numbers, and Acts and Romans (First part).

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THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.—i. 1.

I.

The Beginning.

1. The Gospel had a beginning. With reverent and affectionate interest we look back to the beginnings of those things which possess our allegiance as established powers, or are daily enjoyed as familiar blessings. The thought that they had a beginning, that there was once a time when they were not, gives a freshness to the feelings with which we regard them; while the comparison of the state of commencement with the state of perfection brings with it a natural pleasure, in marking the tendencies and the tokens of all that has happened since. No words can open the heart to these impressions so powerfully as those which have just been uttered. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," places us at the opening of the mystery of godliness, of the salvation of the world, of the glory which fills the heavens, and of the Kingdom which endures for ever.

2. What does St. Mark mean by the beginning of the Gospel? Professor Menzies thinks that he regards the whole earthly life of Jesus as the beginning of the Gospel. For, he says, "to the Apostles the earthly life of Jesus was not the main part of the Gospel. His life in heaven at God's right hand, His presence with His people through His Spirit, and His second coming to judgment, these bulked much more largely in the preaching, not only of Paul, but of all the Apostles, than His ministry on earth."[1] If this opinion is correct, the opening

[1] *The Earliest Gospel*, 57.

words of St. Mark would correspond with St. Luke's opening words in the Acts: "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up."

But it is more natural to take the preaching of the Baptist as the beginning. This is the beginning of the Gospel according to St. Peter. "The word," says St. Peter, "which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ,—that word began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (Acts x. 36, 37); and St. Paul in presenting to the Jews "the word of this salvation," dates its proclamation from the time "when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts xiii. 24). Thus each of the Evangelists has a different "beginning." St. Matthew sees it in the ancestry and birth of the Messiah; St. Luke, in the birth of the Baptist; St. John looks back to the "beginning" in which the Word was with God.

3. What is to be regarded as the beginning of the Gospel depends, however, on what is meant by the Gospel. The Gospel, considered as *fact*, began from the Incarnation, and was completed at the Resurrection; but the Gospel, considered as *doctrine*, began from the first preaching of Jesus, and was completed in the dispensation of the Spirit. And we may go yet further back. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not in the New Testament, but in the Old; it began in the simple first promise to our fallen parents; in their sacrificial offerings; in the bleeding lambs of Abel's altar; in the simple faith and worship of the patriarchs. Once more, it may be said to have begun in the predictions of the prophets, who declared in words, as the legal service did in acts, the coming Saviour, and not only foretold, but exhibited to all believers, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And we may go further back still, and say that the Gospel, as a message of salvation, began in the eternal counsel of the Divine will; in the eternal purpose of the God who sent it. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world. The Gospel of Christ could never terminate in our salvation, if it had not first begun in God's decree.

¶ I have read somewhere an ancient Hindu legend to this effect. In an extensive district of the country a terrible famine long prevailed. The parched land refused to yield any sustenance for man or beast, and the wretched people were perishing miserably. A princess of the country knew of their condition and boldly went forth to see for herself; and what she saw of their sufferings filled her with unutterable compassion. The wise men had declared that the only hope for the country was that some worthy person should die for them and so remove the heavy curse. She quietly resolved to become the needed sacrifice, and retiring among the mountains had a grave dug. She crept into it, and was buried; and forth from her grave there gushed a pure stream of water. It rushed down the valley, gathering volume as it flowed, and went forth into the wide plain a river bearing freshness, fertility and life to all the land. That river of life in the old legend did not originate in the grave of the dead princess, but in the warm loving heart of a noble maiden, who, in mighty compassion, gave her life for her perishing people. Even so, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not its beginning in the manger of Bethlehem, in the ministry of John the Baptist, in the Galilean ministry of Jesus, nor yet in the atoning death upon the cross, but in the loving heart of the Eternal God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that all might have eternal life in Him.[1]

4. But the Gospel had a new beginning in the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist. If not expressed, it is at least implied and necessarily indicated, in St. Mark's introductory expression, that John the Baptist's preaching in the wilderness the baptism of repentance, with a view to the remission of sins, was the beginning of the Gospel,—its immediate precursor, the appointed preparation for its full disclosure, so that John's instructions and his baptisms derived all their worth and meaning from the fact that in the verse explained they were the actual beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We find, accordingly, that when John's ministry was closed, and that of Christ Himself succeeded, it was at first simply a continuation of John's preaching; that the burden of both cries was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

¶ The effective teacher must always have a Gospel to proclaim. He cannot place himself on the common level of man's life merely. He must have something to say from God, some Divine message to deliver, something that will attract, cheer, and

[1] W. T. Fleck.

uplift, something that will appeal to that deepest in man which also becomes the highest. He must come, as both John and Jesus did, with "good tidings" from God.[1]

¶ The biographer of Michael Angelo tells that he was once seen standing, chisel in hand, gazing intently on a rough block of marble. Upon being asked what he saw there, he said, "I see a beautiful angel imprisoned, and I mean to set it free." So God gazing on the rough undeveloped mass of humanity saw there the vision of the Ideal Man. The Incarnation of the Divine Son was the deliberate beginning of God on the plane of time to develop the thought of man that was His in all eternity.

II.

The Gospel.

i. The Word "Gospel."

1. *The English word.* The word "gospel" is an English word. It is a translation of the Latin *bona adnuntiatio*, which was a translation of the Greek word (*εὐαγγέλιον*) used in our text. Its original form was *godspel*, *god* being the Anglo-Saxon adjective "good," and *spel* meaning "news." Afterwards *god* was taken for the name God, and *godspel* was understood to be "God's story," or the Book of God; but that was when the name Gospel was used chiefly of the first four books of the New Testament. The Greek word was also turned into the Latin *evangelium*, and that into the Saxon "evangel," and the two words "gospel" and "evangel," one English, the other classical, were used indiscriminately. Taverner in his *Postils*, of date 1540, speaks of "the euangell or glad tydynges of oure saluation (whyche thynge we call commonly in Englyshe a gospell)."

2. *The Greek word.* The Greek word (*εὐαγγέλιον*), of which the English word "gospel" is a translation, was used in classical Greek for the reward given to a man who brought good news; but in later Greek it was used of the good news itself. The latter is its meaning in the Greek of the New Testament. And what was the good news? Throughout the whole New Testa-

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 110.

ment, says Zahn,[1] the whole Gospel is "the oral proclamation of God's plan of salvation as made known and realised by Jesus." As verb or substantive the word occurs in the New Testament more than seventy times. The underlying idea is always "good news" or "joyful annunciation." In course of time, the word "gospel" was used of the books which contain the Gospel. That is to say, the longer but more exact form "the Gospel according to St. Matthew" was contracted into "the Gospel of St. Matthew," and then it became customary to speak of the "four Gospels." This expression occurs as early as Justin Martyr (*Apol.* i. 66).

3. *The use of the word in the New Testament.* The history of the word in the New Testament books is worth notice. It seldom occurs in those lives of our Lord which are now emphatically so called, and where it does occur, it is "the gospel of the Kingdom" quite as frequently as "the gospel" of the King. The word is never used in Luke, and only twice in the Acts of the Apostles, both times in quotations. The Apostle John never employs it, either in his "Gospel" or in his Epistles, and in the Apocalypse the word is only once found, and then it may be a question whether it refers to the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. John thought of the word which he had to proclaim as "the message," "the witness," "the truth," rather than as "the gospel." We search for the expression in vain in the Epistles of James, Jude, and to the Hebrews. Thrice it is used by Peter. The great bulk of the instances of its occurrence are in the writings of Paul, who, if not the first to use it, is at any rate the source from which the familiar meaning of the phrase, as describing the sum total of the revelation in Jesus Christ, has flowed."[2]

¶ I was a little girl, and scarcely knew anything, and this old man seemed to me such a different sort of a man from anybody I had ever seen before, that I thought he had perhaps come down from the sky to preach to us, and I said, "Aunt, will he go back to the sky to-night, like the picture in the Bible?"

That man of God was Mr. Wesley, who spent his life in doing what our blessed Lord did—preaching the Gospel to the poor—and he entered into his rest eight years ago. I came to know more about him years after, but I was a foolish, thoughtless child

[1] *Introduction to the New Testament*, ii. 373.

[2] A. Maclaren.

then, and I remembered only one thing he told us in his sermon. He told us as "Gospel" meant "good news" The Gospel, you know, is what the Bible tells us about God.[1]

4. The Gospel is described in the New Testament by different phrases.

(1) The "gospel of Christ." It is His, not so much because He is the author, as because He is the subject of it. It is the good news about Christ. He is its contents and great theme. And so we are led up at once to the great central peculiarity of Christianity, namely, that it is a record of historical fact, and that all the world's life and blessedness lie in the story of a human life and death. Christ is Christianity. His biography is the good news for every child of man.

(2) The "gospel of God." This form of the expression, though by no means so frequent as the other, is found throughout St. Paul's Epistles, thrice in the earliest—Thessalonians (1 Thess. ii. 8), once in the great Epistle to the Romans (i. 1), once in Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 17), and once in a modified form in the pathetic letter from the dungeon, which the old man addressed to his "son Timothy" (1 Tim. i. 11). It is also found in the writings of St. Peter (1 Pet. iv. 7). In all these cases the phrase, "the gospel of God," may mean the gospel which has God for its author or origin, but it seems rather to mean "which has God for its subject." It was designated mainly as the good news about Jesus Christ, but it is also the good news about God. So in one and the same set of facts we have the history of Jesus and the revelation of God.

¶ There is a double modification of this phrase. We hear of "the gospel of the grace of God" and "the gospel of the glory of God," which latter expression, rendered in the English version misleadingly "the glorious gospel," is given in its true shape in the Revised Version. The great theme of the message is further defined in these two noteworthy forms. It is the tender love of God in exercise to lowly creatures who deserve something else that the Gospel is busy in setting forth, a love which flows forth unbought and unmotived save by itself, like some stream from a hidden lake high up among the pure Alpine snows. The story of Christ's work is the story of God's rich unmerited love, bending down to creatures far beneath, and making a radiant

[1] Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, ch. ii.

pathway from earth to heaven, like the sevenfold rainbow. It is so, not merely because this mission is the result of God's love, but also because His grace is God's grace, and therefore every act of Christ which speaks His own tenderness is therein an apocalypse of God.

The second of these two expressions, "the gospel of the glory of God," leads up to the great thought that the true glory of the Divine nature is its tenderness. The lowliness and death of Christ are the glory of God! Not in the awful attributes which separate that inconceivable Nature from us; not in the eternity of His existence, or in the Infinitude of His Being; not in the Omnipotence of His unwearied arm, or in fire-eyed Omniscience,—but in the pity and graciousness which bend lovingly over us, is the true glory of God. These pompous "attributes" are but the fringes of the brightness, the living white heart of which is love. God's glory is God's grace, and the purest expression of both is found there, where Jesus hangs dying in the dark. The true throne of God's glory is not builded high in a remote heaven, flashing intolerable brightness and set about with bending principalities and powers, but it is the Cross of Calvary. The story of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," with its humiliation and shame, is the "gospel of the grace," and therefore it is the "gospel of the glory of God."

(3) The "gospel of salvation" (Eph. i. 13) and the "gospel of peace" (vi. 15). In these expressions we pass from the consideration of the author or of the subject-matter of the good news to that of its purpose and issue. It is meant to bring to men, and it does in fact bring to all who accept it, the wide and complex blessings described by those two great words.

(4) "The gospel." By far the most frequent form in which the word "gospel" occurs is that of the simple use of the noun with the definite article. The message is emphatically *the* good news. It is the tidings which men most of all want. It stands alone; there is no other like it. If this be not the glad tidings of great joy for the world, then there are none.[1]

¶ A poor little street girl was taken sick one Christmas, and was carried to the hospital. While there she heard the story of Jesus coming into the world to save us. It was all new to her, but very precious. She could appreciate such a wonderful Saviour, and the knowledge made her very happy as she lay

[1] A. Maclaren.

in her little cot. One day the nurse came round at the usual hour, and "Little Broomstick" [her street name] held her by the hand and whispered, "I'm havin' real good times here, ever such good times! S'pose I shall have to go away from here as soon as I get well; but I'll take the good time along—some of it anyhow. Did you know 'bout Jesus bein' born?"

"Yes," replied the nurse, "I know, sh-sh-sh! Don't talk any more."

"You did? I thought you looked as if you didn't, and I was goin' to tell you."

"Why, how did I look?" asked the nurse, forgetting her own orders in her curiosity.

"Oh, just like most folks—kind of glum—I shouldn't think you'd ever look glum if you knowed about Jesus bein' born."[1]

ii. The Contents of the Gospel.

Let us pass from the expressions used to designate the Gospel to its contents.

1. One way of discovering the contents of the Gospel is to ask what the Gospel meant to St. Paul. Principal W. B. Selbie finds that the Gospel which St. Paul preached contained three essential things.

(1) First of all, St. Paul taught men that this Jesus was *the Son of God.* A close study of his letters concerning Jesus Christ leads to the conclusion that while he holds, or seems to hold, that the Lord Jesus Christ was in some way inferior and subordinate to God the Father, he yet very frequently puts Him, as it were, side by side with God, and reads God in terms of His revelation. To him God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him Jesus Christ has the religious value of God; to him Jesus Christ is the centre, sum, and beginning of the Christian religion. It is in Christ that men find God, it is through Him that they discover God's truth, and it is by their relation to Him that they enter into communion with God Himself.

(2) But to St. Paul Jesus was not only the Son of God, He was *the Saviour of the world.* His saving work centred in, and was made possible by, His cross. To St. Paul the

[1] M. S. Braithwaite.

cross of Jesus Christ is the great central pillar of his faith; and he is determined that he will know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that he will glory in nothing save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. In his attempts to describe the meaning of the death of Jesus on the cross, St. Paul almost exhausts the possibilities of human speech. It is a sacrifice, a propitiation, a means of reconciliation, an atonement. In every possible way, and by every possible kind of illustration, he tries to bring home to the hearts of men this thought, that in Jesus Christ's death, in the love that that death involved and manifested, there is a ground and reason for man's hope and peace, for his forgiveness, his justification, his salvation, his sanctification.

(3) Once more, to St. Paul Jesus Christ was not only Son of God and Saviour of the world, but He was *Lord of Life*. In the writings of this Apostle the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and His present life and power resulting from it, play a very large part. To him the resurrection was vital. It meant everything. It meant all the difference between a dead and a living Christ. It meant all the difference between hope and despair. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." To St. Paul Jesus Christ was not a sacred and beautiful memory, He was a living power; and in Him the Apostle himself lived.

2. From a study of the early preaching of the Acts of the Apostles, Dr. Campbell Morgan concludes that there are four notes characterising the Gospel.

(1) The first note in the early preaching of the Acts of the Apostles is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The first thing the Gospel says is "Jesus is Lord." It is that "God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36). And this should be first in the preaching of the Gospel still. For the first business of the evangel is to bring to man the consciousness of sin. Now there is no way of bringing a man to consciousness of sin so powerfully as by bringing him into the presence of Christ as Lord.

¶ Mount Sinai never made me afraid in my life. I was born of Christian parents, nurtured in a Christian home, and I never

cease to thank God for it. I passed into personal relationship with Christ without volcanic consciousness. I cannot find you the day of my new birth. I came into the presence of Sinai; was overawed by its majesty, was conscious of the stupendous dignity, but I never said in its presence, "I am a sinner." But there came at last with the passing of the years the consciousness of this Christ. I came into the Presence of Him with His supernal loveliness, with His self-emptying love. And when I stood in His Presence and saw Him—nay, I have never seen Him yet in all His glory; it is too bright for the feebleness of a sinner's sight—when I began to measure my life no longer by standards of a law written upon tables of stone, no longer by the standards of my neighbours or friends or the average man—that dreadful average man who is ruining so many; but when I began to measure my life by the standard of that one Supreme Life, when I came into the presence of the Lordship of Christ, I went down into the dust and said, "If *that* was the ideal, then God have mercy upon me a sinner."[1]

(2) The second note is the proclamation of the Cross, the sacrifice for sin. When the spirit is bowed, and a man becomes conscious of the paralysis and the power of sin, we show him the vision of this same King going to death.

(3) The third note is the preaching of the Resurrection. For He went to the cross willingly. No man took His life from Him; He laid it down of Himself "that he might take it again." In the vision of the Lord I come to know my sin; in the mystery of the cross my conscience is satisfied with pardon; now I need strength to stand and power to do. Christ rose to communicate a dynamic by which I may live. Pardoned in His death, I am saved in His Life.

(4) There is a fourth note. It is the proclamation of the perpetual presence of that Lord, that Saviour, that Risen One. He ascended on high and "gave gifts."

¶ On one occasion, when Tennyson was rusticating in a country place, he asked an old woman if there was any news. She replied, "Why, Mr. Tennyson, there's only one piece of news that I know, and that is, Christ died for all men." He responded, "That is old news, and good news, and new news."

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

III.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

1. That is, the Gospel of which Jesus Christ is the subject, the good news concerning Him who, when this book was written and this title placed in front of it, was known to the Church as Jesus the Messiah. "The wonderful name Christ is first added to the proper name Jesus after He had shown Himself to be the divinely consecrated king whom the Old Testament predicted (Acts ii. 36). But the Evangelists write the double name Jesus Christ above the portals of their Gospels (Mark i. 1; John i. 17) as an anagram or emblem of the entire following history, similarly as the Torah stamps the name Jehovah Elohim as such an anagram upon the entrance of the sacred history."[1]

¶ There is some doubt as to the genuineness of the words "the Son of God" here. But the doubt was not sufficient to compel the Revisers to place the words in the margin. If accepted as part of the text, says Professor Menzies, they must be understood, like all the terms in this verse, in the Pauline sense. In the body of the Gospel, Jesus is spoken of as Son of God by the demons (iii. 11, v. 7), and by the heavenly voice at the baptism (i. 11), and at the transfiguration (ix. 7). In these cases the phrase is an official Messianic title, denoting the representative of God who is empowered, like David of old, to execute Divine purposes. It implies no doctrine as to His extraction or essential nature. In Paul, on the other hand, the Son of God is a heavenly figure (Rom. i. 4; Gal. iv. 4), who was with God before He appeared in the world, and has now been exalted to still higher honours than He enjoyed before. In this verse the words must express the writer's own view of Christ's nature; and as he writes for Gentiles, only the latter, metaphysical sense of the phrase can be thought of. The doctrine of the Son of God could not arise on Jewish soil, but to Greek-speaking people it presented little difficulty. The root of the Christian doctrine is undoubtedly to be sought in Jesus' own teaching as to His relation to God, and in Paul's development of that teaching.[2]

2. The name *Jesus* (that is, Joshua) was in the post-exilic times a common Jewish name: Joshua is equivalent to Jehoshua, which means "Jehovah is salvation." In the Septuagint as well

[1] F. Delitzsch, *Old Testament History of Redemption*, 182.
[2] A. Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel*, 57, note.

as in the New Testament (as Heb. iv. 8) the name of the patriarch Joshua is written Jesus. "Our Lord did not have an exceptional name, for He was a man, and, as such, a member of a people, a child of an age and of a country. This name, however, is the most fitting that He could have had. It signifies 'Jehovah is salvation,' and, as the name of the Lord, the bearer and the mediator of salvation. The designation is prepared by such passages as Gen. xlix. 18; Isa. xlix. 6, lii. 10, especially in the Book of Isaiah; even the name of this prophet signifies 'the salvation of Jehovah,' or 'Jehovah saves.' The name Christ united with Jesus, is made a proper name by the omission of the article, as Elohim in the designation Jehovah-Elohim becomes a proper name in the same way."

For us, the Lord is known by a sweeter, tenderer, more human name than Jehovah. For us the Lord is—Jesus. For us the secret is deeper, more wonderful, more unutterable. It is a knowledge more intimate, more immediate, more personal, than was possible for men for whom God was in the heavens beyond the blue. The secret of the Lord for us is that of one who has come very near to us, and has been found in the likeness of a man. It is the secret of one who has made Himself known to us in the breaking of the bread. What that secret is to each one of us depends on what Jesus is, and has become, to us.

¶ St. Francis of Assisi steeps his mind in the Gospels. He is caught and held by the winsome beauty of his Lord. He sees Him, in a fresh vision, going about doing good, and he goes through the villages of Italy, a gracious and tender presence, reminiscent of the compassion of Christ. John Wesley passes through his nights and days of enlightenment and consecration, rises into a new knowledge and an unshakable assurance of Christ's love, and goes out to the almost pagan villages of England with his Master's message of life from the dead. Thomas Chalmers, rising from his sick-bed to spend a year of Elysium as he pulses with a new affection of joy to Christ, goes forth to pour all his roused energy into the evangelisation of Scotland. Father Damien—to take men of all communions—marks Jesus as He touches the leper. He sees the deep significance of the deed, and goes forth to lay his hands in Christlike pity on the outcasts of Molokai.[1]

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Secret of the Lord*, 6.

3. Why is the Gospel called the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

(1) Because there is good news in what He *said*. There is a directness, a reality, and a force about His words that set them in a category by themselves. He spake out of His own inner consciousness and experience; and though some corresponding experience is needed to enable us to understand His words, the first judgment passed on them remains good, that "never man spake like this man." Yet the only really new things that He can be said to have taught concerned Himself. Such words as "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever"; or "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"; or "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"—were so new and so startling as to be "hard sayings," regarding which even disciples asked, "Who can hear him?" And they are hard still to many who seem full of admiration of the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth so long as they relate to already known ethical and spiritual truth.

¶ As we listen to Him we are conscious always and everywhere of matchless elevation. He is far above His countrymen, —far above the wisest wisdom of His time,—far above the wisest wisdom of all succeeding ages of which He has not been directly or indirectly the Author. As we listen to Him we feel that He lives and speaks in an atmosphere to which we can ascend only at rare intervals, and by considerable efforts. As a Teacher, no less than as our Redeemer and our Lord, He invites the praises of the Church: "Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." And, since He is thus above the level of human thought, His words will live. Time effaces that which belongs only and fundamentally to the mind of man; but here is a teaching which bears on it the imprint of a higher origin and a more commanding standpoint; the centuries may pass, but it will not pass away.[1]

(2) Because there is a Gospel in His *work and influence*. One of the most striking contrasts between heathendom and Christendom is in their respective attitudes towards nature and its forces. That of heathenism untouched by Christianity is one of uncertainty, distrust, timidity, even dread or terror; that

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Some Sermons on the Words of Christ*, 13.

of Christianity, on the contrary, is one of confidence, fearlessness, cheerfulness, and admiration. The heathen man moves to and fro like a slave; and the Christian walks the earth with head erect, feeling, if not exactly *thinking*, that as the Book of Genesis puts it, he was meant to have dominion over earth and sea, and all things that are therein. We are no longer as strangers on the earth; we regard and treat it as our home. What is the reason of the contrast? How has the gulf been bridged over? A common answer is, the *progress of science* and the arts of civilisation and culture. Yes; but the progress of science and the arts is the very thing that needs to be explained. That *is* the bridge; and the question is, How came the bridge to be built? It was Christ who by His *attitude* towards and *full control* of nature—so marvellous and yet so natural and easy, so tremendous in authority and yet so full of goodness and kindness—became for all time that most effective agency by which the human race has been put in possession of its birthright of free and fearless movement and activity in the midst of the complex and tremendous forces of the system to which it belongs. His influence, indeed, was not directly intellectual or scientific, but moral and personal.

¶ Let a man think of the general *fruits* that have followed from faith in Christ, of the difference between Christian and non-Christian civilisations, of the social spirit and social advances that have followed wherever Christ has been preached; let him remember that all that is best in our own national life is due to the Christian missionaries who preached Christ to our ignorant, half-savage ancestors. Thoughts like these crowd in upon him, and he says, "Surely He to whom all this was owing, or from whom it started, cannot have been an ordinary Person; there must have been at least an exceptional power of God in Him; all those who believed in Him and found such experiences through Him cannot have been wholly deluded; they were not all fools or ignorant people. What I witness as the effects of Christianity is very much like what I see when the Spring sun begins to shine on the cold ice-bound earth and the Divine beneficent forces of nature are set a-working, so that under warm skies, from the bleak ground, life begins to sprout, and leaf, bud flower, and fruit gradually to appear. It looks very much as if this Christ were a sun in the spiritual heavens, through the shining of which, on the hearts of men, those higher Divine forces which make for true life and manhood have been made

active, so that if I see God in nature, I must see God also there—more manifestly *there*.[1]

¶ And it is there the difference comes in between a visionary and a Christian. A visionary dreams his dreams, and builds his castles in the air, and they are radiant, and wonderful, and golden, and the light of heaven glitters on every minaret. And then, because he cannot realise them *now*, and cannot draw them in all their heavenly beauty down to earth, the visionary folds his hands, does nothing, and the vision goes. But the true Christian, with hopes as glorious as any visionary's, because they are the hopes of Jesus Christ, carries the glory of them into his common duty, and into the cross-bearing of the dreary day. And though the generations die, and the purposes of God take a thousand years to ripen, he serves and is content.[2]

> Jesus *shall* reign where'er the sun
> Doth his successive journeys run.

(3) Because *He Himself* is the good news, because He is what He is. "Jesus," says Harnack, "belongs to His Gospel, not as a part of it, but as its embodiment. He is its personal realisation and its power. And such He will always be felt to be."

In placing *the statement of the person of Christ* as the first work of the Gospel histories, we speak in accordance with the spirit of those books and of the whole ensuing system of doctrine. Jesus Christ created the Gospel by His work; He preaches the Gospel by His words; but He *is* the Gospel in Himself. The expression is but the condensation of a hundred passages of Scripture which declare Him to *be* that which, in more timid but less adequate language, we might say that He *wrought*, or that He *taught*, or that He *gave*. "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25). He "is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14), He "is our life" (Col. iii. 4), He "is the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27), He "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30); and they who are saved "are made partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii. 14), not merely of His gifts, whether they be gifts of grace or glory. Is it not indeed the distinguishing feature of the Christian system that it places the foundation of salvation in

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 51.
[2] G. H. Morrison, *Flood-Tide*, 212.

living relations with a living person, rather than in the adoption of opinions or of habits? that under it the believer is, not the man who maintains the doctrine of the Trinity, or holds "justification by faith," but the man who has "come to" Christ, and "abides in" Him?[1]

¶ I think it is the keeping of all the parts of Christian truth in due connection with and subordination to the central truth that makes some High Churchmen so "evangelical." People expect to hear them talk of nothing but the Church and the Priesthood and the Sacraments, and they find that there is one subject which towers above them all, and gives life to all. First, and before all, or rather in and through all, they preach Christ. That is Apostolic preaching—for the first Christians, it has been said, did not believe in Christianity, they believed in *Christ*.[2]

O Jesu, better than Thy gifts
  Art Thou Thine only Self to us!
Palm branch its triumph, harp uplifts
  Its triumph-note melodious:
    But what are such to such as we?

O Jesu, better than Thy saints
  Art Thou Thine only Self to us!
The heart faints and the spirit faints
  For only Thee all-Glorious,
    For Thee, O only Lord, for Thee.[3]

[1] T. D. Bernard.
[2] A. L. Moore, *The Message of the Gospel*, p. 23.
[3] C. G. Rossetti.

The Temptation.

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THE TEMPTATION.

And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.—i. 12, 13.

THESE two verses contain St. Mark's account of the temptation of Jesus. He does not describe the three separate acts of temptation which are given both in St. Matthew and in St. Luke. But he has some features of his own. They are expressed in the words "immediately," "driven," "wild beasts."

Altogether St. Mark's description of the Temptation contains five parts, which may be considered in order—

1. The Driving of the Spirit.
2. The Wilderness.
3. Satan.
4. The Wild Beasts.
5. The Ministering Angels.

I.

The Driving of the Spirit.

"And straightway the Spirit driveth him."

Our classical scholars have a recognised rule that they observe as often as they are engaged upon an ancient manuscript. The rule is to this effect: that the more difficult any reading is, the more likely it is to be the true reading. Now each of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has his own peculiar reading in the way he narrates to us the manner of our Lord's entrance upon His time of temptation. And since that threefold variation of theirs allows, and indeed

invites me to take my free choice among those three readings of theirs, I have no hesitation, for my part, in preferring the reading of Mark before the other two. For if his reading is at first sight the most difficult to receive, afterwards it becomes the most lifelike, the most arresting, the most suggestive, of the three offered readings. And all that goes to prove to me that Mark's reading is the true and original reading, and that the other two readings have, so to speak, been toned down from it. "And immediately the Spirit *driveth* him into the wilderness."[1]

i. Straightway.

1. "Immediately" (or "straightway," R.V.) is one of St. Mark's great words. He uses it forty-one times, while St. Matthew uses it nineteen times, and St. Luke only seven times. Matthew here uses "then," Luke simply "and." Each Evangelist, however, has some word of connection.

2. Immediately after what? Immediately after the Baptism. Now at the Baptism two things had occurred—the Spirit as a dove had descended upon Jesus, and a voice had come from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." These experiences were inseparable, but they may be examined separately.

(1) The voice recognised Jesus as the Son of God in the sense in which the Messiah is spoken about as God's Son in the Old Testament. That is to say, there is complete understanding between the Father and the Son, the fellowship of love. And that fellowship is not merely the emotion of love. The understanding between Father and Son is directed to the work which Jesus as Messiah is to do.

(2) Then follows the endowment of the Holy Spirit. It is new and unparalleled, just because the fellowship is new and unparalleled. And it is an endowment for the accomplishment of the work which the Father has given Him to do. The first energy of the Spirit, however, is not seen in the accomplishment of some Messianic act. If Jesus is conscious of being the Son of God, He is also conscious of being a son of man. And like all the sons of men, He must be tested. He must be tested as a man. He must face a man's temptations, and stand or fall.

[1] Alexander Whyte.

Before He can go forth as the Messiah, that is to say, as the Saviour of the world, it must be made evident to Himself and to all the world that He Himself does not need to be saved. "And straightway the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness to be tempted."

¶ Why does the temptation come so soon after the blessing? Just to show that it is the sequel of the blessing. What was that in Jesus with which the Father was well pleased? It was the vision of what was to come, the vision of where the Spirit would drive Him. The Father saw that the dove-like peace which had fallen on the Son of Man would make Him fit for the wilderness; He blessed Him for what He would be able to bear. The shining on the banks of Jordan was the hour of His adoption, but the wilderness was the hour of His inheritance.[1]

¶ Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.[2]

¶ When you have been at prayer, when you have made new resolves, when you have felt the uplifting of Divine grace, when you have taken the Blessed Sacrament,—then beware! For very likely Satan will try to upset you. It will be a grand success for him to take you by surprise and rob you of the good you have got. One has read of the old highway robbers, how they went to work. They always watched for a man who was coming along with plenty of money upon him, a man who had been to market and had been receiving payments.[3]

¶ There are three significant years in the life of St. Paul of which we are told nothing. He beholds the heavenly vision, which suddenly stands like a pillar of fire between his past and his future; in Damascus he learns in detail the truth which from that moment changes his whole life. And what does he do then? He goes into Arabia. He takes himself out of the sight of all men, whether Jews or Christians, out of the hearing of all human voices, into the bleak desert, into the land of rocks and solitude. And there he stays three years. In the history of his life the space of three years is blank, totally blank. So far as we know, St. Paul never spoke of that experience: he never told what happened. But we may guess. He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This new truth which summons you to contradict all that you have said and stood for, which calls you to a career of poverty and difficulty and tragedy—is it true? May there not be some mistake about it?

[1] George Matheson.

[2] Walt Whitman, *Song of the Open Road.*

[3] E. L. Hicks.

And if it is true, what does it mean? What does it mean for you? The apostle went into the desert to meet the devil; and the devil asked him three questions. And it took the apostle three years to answer them. That was his temptation in the wilderness. First, the heavenly vision on the Damascus road; then the long contention with doubt and desire and the devil in Arabia.[1]

ii. The Spirit.

The Authorized Version, using a small *s* at spirit, suggests that it was some evil spirit that drove Him into the wilderness. And it has been deliberately maintained that Satan himself was the driving power. Others have suggested some man or men under the influence of an evil spirit, one of His disciples, perhaps, as Peter or Judas, or even some member of His own family. But without doubt the Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, with which He had just been uniquely endowed. The temptation is the first and necessary step in the fulfilment of the purpose for which Jesus had come into the world.

¶ It is not true to say that the devil arranged the temptation. Temptation here is in the Divine plan and purpose. Jesus went into the wilderness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to find the devil. My own conviction is that if the devil could have escaped that day, he would have done so. It is a very popular fallacy that the enemy drove Christ into a corner and tempted Him. But the whole Divine story reveals that the facts were quite otherwise. God's perfect Man, led by the Spirit, or as Mark in his own characteristic and forceful way expresses it, driven by the Spirit, passes down into the wilderness, and compels the adversary to stand out clear from all secondary causes, and to enter into direct combat. This is not the devil's method. He ever puts something between himself and the man he would tempt. He hides his own personality wherever possible. To our first parents he did not suggest that they should serve him, but that they should please themselves. Jesus dragged him from behind everything, and put him in front, that for once, not through the subtlety of a second cause, but directly, he might do his worst against a pure soul.[2]

¶ The initiative in this temptation was not taken by Satan; it was taken by the Holy Spirit. He displayed masterly generalship. He did not wait until the tempter came, but obliged the

[1] George Hodges.

[2] G. Campbell Morgan, *The Crises of the Christ*, 133.

tempter to come. He forced the fighting. It was a fine bit of generalship. We ought to follow His lead far more there. Most of us, may I say, wait until we are tempted, and then, half-scared, seek for help. But we should always pray ahead, and take the ground before the Evil One can come. That is what the wondrous Holy Spirit does here. He forestalls the Evil One.[1]

¶ At one time Mr. Moody was on an ocean liner, in a great storm, and they were sure the boat was going to the bottom. They were all praying; everybody prays in a bad storm, you know. A gentleman has told that he went to one of the decks, and to his great surprise he saw Mr. Moody standing on the deck, not in the prayer meeting down below, but standing quietly looking out over the raging waters. And he said, "Mr. Moody, aren't you down in the prayer meeting?" And in his quiet way Mr. Moody said, "Oh! I am prayed up." There is a marvellous generalship in praying ahead.[2]

1. The temptation of Jesus was part of God's deliberate plan and purpose. So is the temptation of every man. Yet "no man can say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God." Nor does the fact that God ordains the temptation relieve the instrument of his responsibility. After the crucifixion of Christ, Peter charged the Jews with having taken Him and by wicked hands having crucified and slain Him, although in the same sentence he said that He had been delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And this distinction between the ordainer and the agent of temptation is not one of words. For not only does the withdrawal of anything, save positive sin, from the sphere of God's will, affect the integrity of His moral government of the race, and relax the hold which God has on the progress of human affairs, but the teaching of Scripture is to be reconciled with itself only by bearing in mind that God may ordain a moral discipline for the soul, of which it is impossible He should be the instrument and immediate cause. We are told, for example, by St. James, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man"; and yet we are equally told, "It came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham"; and if it be said that this only means that God did try

[1] S. D. Gordon. [2] *Ibid.*

Abraham, the difficulty is removed but a step further back, for trial is always temptation, just as temptation is always trial. The true solution of the apparent contradiction seems to be suggested by the typical temptation of Christ, that whilst God Himself never does offer, and never can offer, personal seduction or inducement to sin to the soul—the supposition itself is utterly blasphemous—yet God may permit, and may will, that the soul should pass through temptation as the only means of that purifying and strengthening discipline to which we referred in the first chapter, as the chief object and result of all moral trial of every kind. And hence it is that the same temptation may be said, from one point of view, to come from God, and from another, to come from the devil.

¶ Perhaps the most striking illustration of this truth to be found in Scripture is the numbering of the people by David. It is said, in the Book of Samuel, to have been the result of God "moving" David "against" Israel; whilst in the parallel history of the Book of Chronicles we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."[1]

> Was the trial sore?
> Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
> Why comes temptation but for man to meet
> And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
> And so be pedestaled in triumph? Pray
> "Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"
> Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,
> Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
> Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
> That so he may do battle and have praise![2]

2. But we have to be careful that we do not seek temptation, under the impression that it is God's purpose for us, or that it is good for our growth in grace. We may not know what is God's purpose for us. Let us rather pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and remember that Christ did not enter into temptation of His own will, but was driven into it by the Spirit. All three Synoptists emphasise the fact that the temptation of Christ was the result of Divine compulsion and not self-sought. The Spirit "led" or "drove" Him into the wilderness. He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into

[1] G. S. Barrett.

[2] R. Browning, *The Ring and the Book.*

temptation," did not court temptation Himself. So may we expect God to help to "deliver us from evil" and to emerge from the conflict victorious, if our temptations come to us, but not if we go to them.

¶ Once, while William of Orange was laying siege to a town on the Continent, an officer ventured to go with a message to the spot where he was directing the operation of his gunners. When the message was delivered, and the answer to it received, he still lingered. "Sir," said the Prince, "do you know that every moment you stand here is at the risk of your life?" "I run no more risk," replied the officer, "than your Highness." "Yes," said the Prince, "but my duty brings me here, and yours does not." In a few minutes a cannon-ball struck the officer dead. The Prince was untouched.[1]

iii. Driven.

"The Spirit driveth him forth." Yet it was not some outside force. He had *received* the Spirit which now drove Him into the wilderness. It was a pressure from within, although it is not to be watered down into a mere desire of His own soul to be alone. It was that pressure of the Spirit of God, though here in larger, fuller measure, which drove the prophets to do their unwelcome duty and sent them to carry their *burden.* When Jesus sat down to speak in the synagogue of Nazareth, He applied the prophet's words to Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . he hath sent me."

Jesus was not driven forth in spite of His own will. H. J. C. Knight notices that Christ had to take account of four wills—the Father's will, His own, the will of man, and the will of the devil.[2] The will of the devil He deliberately thwarted, and that on all occasions. The will of man He respected, drawing it by the bands of a man, which are the bands of love, but forcing it never. The will of the Father He made His own, bringing His own will into harmony with it.

But He had a will of His own—"Father, if it be possible . . . nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." He was driven forth by the Spirit, because that was the will of the

[1] C. Stanford. [2] *The Temptation of our Lord*, 45.

Father. But in the wilderness, as in Gethsemane, He made the Father's will His own.

¶ There is only one knob to the door of a man's heart. That is on the inside. The tempter cannot get in unless the man within turns that knob and lets him in. And, be it remembered with greatest reverence, that our gracious God *won't* come in except by the man's free consent. *Man* is the battle-field. He decides which way the battle should go. No man can be whipped without his own consent. And every man may have victory, sweet and full, if he wants it.[1]

O well for him whose will is strong!
  He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong:
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
  Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
  That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
  Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.[2]

iv. Driven to be Tempted.

1. Why was Jesus driven forth to be tempted?

1. Because He was a man. Temptation is as inevitable to man as death. "Terrible to all men is death," says Carlyle; "from of old named king of terrors." But to some men at least the real king of terrors is not death, but temptation. Jesus was "in all things made like unto his brethren" (Heb. ii. 17).

To be human is to be tempted. It is a matter of fact, wherever you find a man you find a tempted being. God's will has never been that we shall find it easy to do right and hard to do wrong. And the reasons lie in the nature of the case. For the making and training of moral beings, temptation is necessary. Virtue untried is no virtue; valour untested is no valour. Untempted virtue is at best what Milton calls "a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary." We are destined to gain moral strength and a developed manhood by the overcoming of trials, difficulties, temptations. As Milton further

[1] S. D. Gordon. [2] Tennyson.

reminds us, "Our sage and serious poet Spenser, describing true temperance under the guise of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he may see and know and yet abstain."

¶ The temptation was involved in the Incarnation—it was necessary; it could not be avoided. That is purpose enough. If you meet a man in a steamer going to Europe, and ask him why he came to sea, he tells you what his business is in Europe—why he had to go there. The purpose of his going there is his purpose in crossing the sea. He could not do one without the other. And so we can well believe that the perfect holiness could not come into this wicked world to save us without coming to struggle with the sin of which the world is full. The Incarnation was a real Incarnation. Christ did not play at being made man. Into everything that really belongs to man He perfectly entered.[1]

> And so I live, you see,
> Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
> Prefer, still struggling to effect
> My warfare; happy that I can
> Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
> Not left in God's contempt apart,
> With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
> Tame in earth's paddock, as her prize.[2]

2. He was tempted that we might know Him to be man, that we might recognise Him unmistakably as of ourselves, and take Him for an example. It is in temptation that we need His example most of all. And if He had not been a man in His temptation He would have been no example.

¶ I believe it can be shown that these experiences so follow the lines of the generically human, of what is true for all men, and point the way to the solution of so many problems affecting human life universally, as to compel the conviction that this is, at least, one design behind the record of His career, namely, that it should exhibit once for all the central, archetypal human life in its victory over all incompleteness, and over all evil. This conviction is specially forced upon any one who ponders much on the story known as the Temptation of Jesus. Standing where it does in the record of His career, a *résumé* of the main elements in His soul-travail as He stood on the threshold of His life's work, it reflects not His temptations only, but ours: setting

[1] Phillips Brooks. [2] R. Browning, *Easter Day*.

forth, under the veil of parable, the universal human threshold fight, the multiform yet essentially threefold moral conflict which men everywhere must endure who would at the outset of their career place themselves in the path to true success.[1]

¶ Sometimes we meet people of much piety and sweetness of character, who have lived quiet lives and gained much respect, but who do not carry with them a rebuke of sin, because sinners say, "They have never been tempted." The poor, fallen woman sometimes says, as the world's wife and daughter sweep by her with disdain, "They would have been no better than I, had they lived as I have done." The thief thinks that magistrate and judge might have been in the dock with him, had they known what it was to be unable to get work and food. We look at the Lord Jesus, and say, "Man was never tempted as He was tempted," and we hail Him as Saviour, not because Satan left Him alone, but because Satan assailed Him on every hand and was defeated.[2]

"Get thee hence, Satan!" at His withering look
Hell's tottering kingdom to its centre shook;
While from the myriad Angel hosts on high
Burst forth loud shouts of praise and victory.
'Gainst man the fiend had tried his worst in vain
And hope for ruined man shone forth again.
Dismayed, undone, the baffled tempter fled,
In lowest hell to hide his bruised head;
Crippled his power, his reign of darkness o'er,
The kingdoms of the world his own no more.
Yet not unscathed the Conqueror in the strife,
Who there had won for unborn millions life;
Crushed was the foe beneath His conquering tread,
But bruised the Victor's heel by that foul head.
As Man, not God, He fought in that dark hour,
And braved alone the tempter's utmost power;
The Woman's Seed, the Virgin's mighty Son,
As Man had fought, as Man the victory won;
Wielding that sword alone which man can wield,
Quenching the fiery darts with man's own shield.
And still as Man, with fasting faint and worn,
His inmost soul by that fierce conflict torn;
Alone He stands upon the mountain now,
Cold drops of anguish on His suffering brow,
Sadly foreshadowing that tremendous night,
When drops of blood should start in deadlier fight.

[1] G. A. Johnston Ross. [2] L. R. Rawnsley.

Alone? no, not alone, for swift draw near
Bright Angel forms, to strengthen and to cheer;
To minister to all His wants and woes,
And soothe His weary form in calm repose.[1]

3. He was tempted in order that we might feel assured of His sympathy. "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

¶ Carlyle was at one time strongly tempted to give up striving for success in literature: "No periodical editor wants me; no man will give me money for my work. Despicablest fears of coming to absolute beggary besiege me." His *Sartor* was pronounced "clotted nonsense"; but at this critical juncture he received a letter from some nameless Irishman, recognising its merit, and this one voice renewed Carlyle's strength. "One mortal, then, says I am not utterly wrong; blessings on him for it." Every one knows what the sympathy of Kadijah was to Muhammad, how all her life he set her first: "She believed in me when none else would believe. In all the world I had but one friend, and she was that." This is part of the aid which Christ's sympathy brings to us; He believes in us; when others shake their heads, and we ourselves are in despair, He tells us we may yet succeed.[2]

¶ As Christ's temptation was vicarious, and when He conquered He conquered for others besides Himself, so it is with us. There are men and women all around us who have to meet the same temptations that we are meeting. Will it help them or not to know that we have met them and conquered them? Will it help us or not to know that if we conquer the temptation we conquer not for ourselves only, but for them? Will it help the master of a great business house or not to know that if he resists the temptation to cheat on a large scale it will help every clerk at the counter to resist his petty temptation to his little fraud? Will it help a father to keep sober or not if he knows that in his victory over drink his son's victory becomes easier? The vicariousness of all life! There is not one of us who has not some one more or less remotely fastened to his acts, concerning whom he may say, as Christ said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself."[3]

¶ The raw apprentice, who is trying his best, and finds a great deal in his work that is dull and difficult, is cheered at once if his foreman tells him, "I have gone through it all, my lad, in my time—it's the only way of getting a good training. Go on, and

[1] Sophie F. F. Veitch. [2] Marcus Dods. [3] Phillips Brooks.

things will be easier soon." The youth in his teens, bewildered and surprised by the new and mysterious impulses that are surging up within him, confusing his conscience, engulfing his will, might be saved from years of sorrow by a word of sympathy from one older than himself. Why do not fathers speak frankly and calmly to their lads at that critical age, and assure them of their knowledge and their perfect sympathy? What a moral leverage it would confer, what a new power for victory![1]

¶ Galahad is not the only hero of that mediæval legend, called the Quest of the Holy Grail. It is told to the accompaniment of solemn music how Parsifal achieved the Grail. The most significant difference between the two is that Galahad wins with ease, but Parsifal with difficulty. Galahad is born good, and stays good, and never meets a champion who does him any serious hurt. On he goes, serene and confident, as if the Quest of the Grail were but a summer journey along a shady lane. But Parsifal is one of us. He has our human nature. He fights our human battles, while we hold our breath wondering whether he will win or not; he meets our own temptations and finds them terribly hard, as we do, struggles with them, wrestles with them, is weary and heavy-laden, hurt and bleeding. When he achieves the vision of the Grail, it is not with smiling face and shining armour. Parsifal is the true hero of the search for the Holy Grail, not the serene Galahad. In the story of the temptation, the Son of God shows us that He is the Son of Man. The Divine master, the Lord of life, assures us that He is of our kin and kind, flesh of our flesh. He suffers with us, as well as for us: and is perfectly good, but not easily good.[2]

4. He was tempted that Satan might be defeated. And now we have the great advantage of fighting a defeated foe. All the stinging sense of defeat, the disappointment and disheartening that defeat makes, he knows. And all the swing and spirit, the joyousness and elasticity of action, that come from an assured victory already won, we have in our Lord Jesus. We ought to sing as we fight.

¶ I recall the experience of a man of matured years and well-seasoned judgment. He had been led to take an advance step in his Christian life which meant much of sacrifice. He has since then been used in Christian service in a marked way, and to an unusual degree. This experience came just after the step referred to had been taken. He was awakened in the night by a sense of an unwholesome presence in the room, or rather that

[1] E. L. Hicks. [2] George Hodges.

the room was full of evil beings. A peculiar feeling of horror came over him, with strange bodily sensations. The air of the room seemed stifling. He quickly recognised that he was being attacked, rose from bed, and attempted to sing a verse of a hymn with Jesus' Name in it. It seemed impossible at first to get his lips open, or any sound out. But he persisted, and soon the soft singing was clear and full, and the spirit atmosphere of the room cleared at once. And with grateful heart he lay down again, and slept sweetly until the morning. Yet he is a man of unusual caution, with a critical matter-of-fact spirit of investigation.[1]

2. Two questions must be asked here—(1) Was the temptation of our Lord a reality? (2) What means did He use to win?

1. Was His temptation a reality? Yes, it was a real temptation. That is to say, it could not have been a temptation unless there was present the possibility of yielding to it. You can say on one side of the question that our Lord could not yield. Theoretically, ethically, you can say quite truly that He could not yield to temptation. But practically it was entirely possible for Him to yield. He was really tempted. He faced the question of yielding. He felt the power of each temptation. But He asserted His will, and in full dependence upon the blessed Holy Spirit, He met the tempter at every point. He did not meet the temptations as Son of God. When we are tempted, let us remember that He met every temptation as a *man*, just as we must meet ours, and as we may meet them in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

We do less than justice to this sacred experience of Christ, less than justice to His perfect sympathy, if we lay no stress on the reality of His temptation. Sinless temptations may be the most severe. Jesus knew nothing of the terrible might and craft of a temperament naturally predisposed to some formidable vice, and pampered by long habitual indulgence into a despotism that brooks no resistance. Miraculously born a Holy Thing, with no evil stain contaminating His blood and driving Him to evil, how could He understand the helpless misery of those whose nature is stained through and through, and all whose

[1] S. D. Gordon.

propensities are towards evil? But it is a mistake to suppose that the most violent temptations are those which appeal to evil passions. The strength of temptation depends, among other things, on the strength of the feeling appealed to, and it is easy to show that pure and right feelings and natural appetites are more powerful and persistent than impure and acquired desires. The drunkard fancies that he must yield to his appetite or die, but that is a mere imagination. His acquired appetite may be resisted without fatally injuring him; but the natural appetite of thirst, if persistently restrained, destroys the physical system. If this natural appetite of thirst can be gratified only at the expense of another's life, as has often happened in shipwreck, in this case the innocent thirst and the ungenerous means of quenching it form material of a temptation far surpassing in severity anything the self-indulgent profligate experiences from the cravings of a pampered appetite. The same law holds good in the higher parts of our nature. The richer a man's nature is, the more interests, the finer susceptibilities he has, the more numerous connections he sustains to other men, and the more loving his attachment to them is, the more open is he to the severest temptations. And it was the wealth of our Lord's nature, the tenderness and truth of His attachment to men, the universality of His sympathy, the vividness of His insight, the vastness of His undertaking, that made Him the object of temptations more distracting, persistent, and severe than those which assail any other.

¶ Temptation does not necessarily imply the expectation of failure. It really means no more than testing. Take a simple illustration. A battleship has its trial trip before it is accepted by the government. The machinery is tested. Can the boilers stand the strain, and make the required speed? Can the guns carry the necessary distance? Can the armour plates withstand the shells? Can the bolts stand the shock of firing? The authorities do not anticipate failure, though there must be this possibility under trial. So it is with human characters. Are the convictions clear, and the will strong enough? Will the man rise up and live in accordance with the higher faculties of his nature, his reason, and conscience, or will he sink to the lower animal desires and instincts? Will he cling to the things that are seen and felt, or will he lay hold of the unseen and spiritual? We are not tempted *to* evil, but *concerning* evil.[1]

[1] A. C. A. Hall.

2. What means did He use to win? He used the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To every form of temptation with which Satan assailed Him, He replied by "It is written." He knew the promises of God, and He believed them. May we not know and believe them also? We have an additional guarantee, even Christ Himself. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea" (2 Cor. i. 20). The only difference between us seems to be that, being full of the Holy Spirit, He was able to believe the promises utterly, and to use them with unerring effect. His whole heart was full of the thought of God, full of the letter and the spirit of the writings that speak of God. And then, when the assault came, it found Him fully armed with the remembrance and love of His Heavenly Father. We must follow that great example. Let us charge our hearts with the love of God and His will, by a habit of prayer and by saturating our minds with the Holy Scripture.

¶ A mother once told me that her two sons, who were the joy of her life, differed only in one particular from one another. She discovered the difference when they were both away from home. She was able to trust one a little more than the other. One of them she knew confidently to be quite safe wherever he might be; the other she was not quite so sure about. One relied solely on his power of character and his sense of security in the keeping of God. The other relied a little too much on his own cleverness and strength of will. And it was this latter fact that gave the mother anxiety. Her own heart defined the difference, and told her that the only safety was in the strength of a pure life. A good man is safe anywhere.[1]

II.

The Wilderness.

"The Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days."

i. Jesus in the Wilderness.

1. Jesus had always a strong desire for human fellowship. He appointed the twelve that they might be with Him (Mark

[1] F. B. Brunskill.

iii. 14). And He afterwards appointed unto them a kingdom because, He said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke xxii. 28, 29). The pain of His "Hour" as it drew near, was intensified by the thought that they would leave Him alone. And when all the agony was over, the promise which He made was, "Lo, I am with you alway." For there was no promise He could make that would mean so much to them in the future; there was none that meant so much to Himself.

Jesus did not choose the wilderness to live in as John the Baptist did. He preferred the haunts of men. And because He lived amongst them they called Him "a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." John had sought the wilderness from his youth in order to the imperfect attainment of what Jesus had in perfection, even while He mingled freely with His fellows. It was a different necessity which drove Jesus into solitude, from that which denied the social life to His Forerunner. It was not that He had need to keep His hands clean from the sordid soiling of gain, or His lips from words that might be hasty and unkind, or false, or in any way injurious; nor that His heart needed to be retired from the reach of stains that might sully it; nor that His feet must be removed from paths where waywardness might stray into the snares of common life. Nor was it that the severities of nature's wildness might ennoble His spirit and strengthen His will for lofty purposes. These were the ends that were sought by John, as they had been sought by many who were lesser than he among the prophets. But it was different with Jesus. He was driven to the Wilderness for the enacting of a drama which no eye might see save Heaven's. The theatre of this temptation must be solitude. This is the explanation of the rigid solitude into which Jesus was driven by the Spirit of God.[1]

2. Yet He was much alone. The prophetic words, "I have trodden the winepress alone" (Isa. lxiii. 3), have always been applied to Him. And in St. Luke's Gospel there is a significant remark that when Jesus was praying alone the disciples were with Him (ix. 18). For not only did He often go away to

[1] A. Morris Stewart.

some mountain to be alone with the Father; but even when the disciples were beside Him, His prayer was solitary. In the deepest exercise of life, He never could associate even His disciples with Him. "Our Father which art in heaven"—that is not the Lord's Prayer—it is ours; for it contains the petition, "and forgive us our trespasses." So when the hour of His temptation came He was driven into the wilderness.

3. What wilderness was it? We cannot tell. If we may search for it geographically it seems to have been further from human habitation than John's wilderness, for He was with the wild beasts. Many find it on the western shores of the Dead Sea. "Those denuded rocks," says Pressensé, "that reddened soil scorched by a burning sun, that sulphurous sea, stretching like a shroud over the accursed cities, all this land of death, mute and motionless as the grave, formed a fitting scene for the decisive conflict of the man of sorrows."

¶ The place was a desert, waste, barren, shelterless, overhead the hot sun, underfoot the burning sand or blistering rock. No outbranching trees made a cool restful shade; no spring upbursting with a song of gladness came to relieve the thirst; no flowers bloomed, pleasing the eye with colour and the nostrils with fragrance: all was drear desert. Now, two things may be here noted—the desolation and the solitude. The heart that loves Nature is strangely open to her influences. The poet sees a glory in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, which exalts and soothes him; but a land of waste and cheerless gloom casts over his spirit a shadow as of the blackness of darkness. And Jesus had the finest, most sensitive soul that ever looked through human eyes. He loved this beautiful world, loved the stars that globed themselves in the heaven above, the flowers that bloomed in beauty on the earth beneath, the light and shade that played upon the face of Nature, now brightening it as with the smile of God, now saddening it as with the pity that gleams through a cloud of tears. Think, then, how the desolation must have deepened the shadows on His spirit, increased the burden that made Him almost faint at the opening of His way. And He was in solitude—alone there, without the comfort of a human presence, the fellowship of a kindred soul. Yet the loneliness was a sublime necessity. In His supreme moments society was impossible to Him. The atmosphere that surrounded the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Agony, and the Cross,

He alone could breathe; in it human sympathy slept or died, and human speech could make no sound. Out of the loneliness He issued to begin His work; into loneliness He passed to end it. The moments that made His work divinest were His own and His Father's.[1]

ii. Why in the Wilderness?

1. *Because temptations are keenest in the wilderness.* There is no human sympathy at hand. And where there is no human sympathy, it is the noblest that temptation assails most fiercely. The hermits fled to the wilderness to escape temptation. They fled to Satan's chosen battle-ground, and the saintlier they were, the more was his advantage over them.

¶ We are apt to think that Satan is most powerful in crowded thoroughfares. It is a mistake. I believe the temptations of life are always most dangerous in the wilderness. I have been struck with that fact in Bible history. It is not in their most public moments that the great men of the past have fallen; it has been in their quiet hours. Moses never stumbled when he stood before Pharaoh, or while he was flying from Pharaoh; it was when he got into the *desert* that his patience began to fail. David never stumbled while he was fighting his way through opposing armies; it was when the fight was over, when he was resting quietly under his own vine, that he put forth his hand to steal. The sorest temptations are not those spoken, but those echoed. It is easier to lay aside your besetting sin amid a cloud of witnesses than in the solitude of your own room. The sin that besets you is never so beseeching as when you are alone. You may say kind things in public to the man you hate; but you make up for it in the wilderness. It is our *thoughts* that hurt us; and we think most in solitude. Many a man who resists the temptation to drunkenness at the dinner-table is conquered at the secret hour. Paul says that the Christian armour is most needed after we have vanquished the outward foe, "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, *having done all*, to stand."[2]

2. *It is through temptation that He must win His place among men.* And first of all He must be separated from men, and He must feel the separation. That is the reason why He was driven into the wilderness. The separation was itself the temptation.

[1] A. M. Fairbairn. [2] George Matheson.

(1) He came to John's baptism that He might identify Himself with men. "All the people were baptized," says St. Luke; "Jesus also was baptized." John knew that there was a difference. But Jesus would have it so. "For thus it becometh us," He said, "to fulfil all righteousness." It was not simply that He made Himself one with the multitude; it was that He identified Himself with them in their sin. It was a vicarious act—not the vicarious act, however, of one standing without the race. It was an act whose very vicariousness consisted in this, that He made Himself one of the race, a sinless One, content to be reckoned with sinners.

(2) But if He has already identified Himself with mankind, why is He now separated from men? Because before He begins His work as Saviour He must prove Himself to be a man. The identification in baptism is the identification of the Saviour with the race He has come to save. In return for that He received the voice from heaven and the endowment of the Spirit. But before He goes forward to His work as Saviour He must meet His own temptations as a man, and conquer. For He can never be the Saviour of others if He needs a Saviour Himself. Now, every man must meet his temptations alone. Jesus must be driven into the wilderness.

¶ We must be solitary when we are tempted. The management of the character, the correction of evil habits, the suppression of wrong desires, the creation of new virtues—this is a work strictly individual, with which no "stranger intermeddleth," in which the sympathy of friends may be deceptive, and our only safety is in a superhuman reliance. The relation of the human being to God is altogether personal: there can be no partnership in its responsibilities. Our moral convictions must have an undivided allegiance; and to withhold our reverence till they are supported by the suffrage of others is an insult which they will not bear. What can those even who read us best know of our weaknesses and wants and capabilities? They would have to clothe themselves with our very consciousness before they could be fit advisers here. How often does their very affection become our temptation, cheat us out of our contrition, and lead us to adopt some pleasant theory about ourselves, in place of the stern and melancholy truth![1]

¶ In the end each must do the work for himself, and in his

[1] James Martineau.

own fashion. Only in solitude can the hardest part of the pathway to reality be trodden:—

> Space is but narrow—east and west—
> There is not room for two abreast.

No one of us is like any other, either in his needs or in the mode in which these needs must be satisfied. Every man bears the impress of his finitude, with its infinite variety of form. Hardly less is that impress borne by even the greatest and highest expression in which the truth is told to us. Yet if that truth be hard to reach —nay, even if the most genuinely strenuous effort to reach it must ever remain incomplete, and the work have to be done over again by each one for himself, we have no justification for despair, or for sitting in idleness with folded hands. For in the search for truth, as in all the other phases of our activity, we gain and keep our life and freedom only by daily conquering them anew.[1]

(3) But more than that. The wilderness was necessary to the temptation, because *isolation is death.* What was the death He died for sinners on Calvary? It was separation from the Father. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—that was His death on Calvary. For fellowship with God is life; and the moment that a man sins he dies because he breaks that fellowship. As a Saviour our Lord identified Himself with man even in baptism; but that was only a foretaste. He drank the cup of identification on the Cross when the Father made Him feel His unity with sinners in their separation from God. But He is to be a man as well as a Saviour. Before He can enter into the fulness of fellowship with man He must be separated from man and feel the separation. He must of His own free will die to man that He may rise again into the enjoyment of human fellowship, and be indeed the Son of man. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Unless Jesus had been driven into the wilderness He would have remained without the human family.

> Thou wast alone through Thy redemption vigil,
> Thy friends had fled;
> The angel at the garden from Thee parted,
> And solitude instead,
> More than the scourge, or Cross, O, tender-hearted,
> Under the crown of thorns bowed down Thy head.[2]

[1] R. B. Haldane, *The Pathway to Reality.*

[2] H. E. H. King.

III.

Satan.

"Tempted of Satan."

i. The Form of the Temptation.

In what sense is the narrative to be taken? Many writers accept it as literal history, and suppose the tempter to have appeared in bodily form and to have conveyed our Lord, also in the body, both to the mountain top and to the pinnacle of the Temple. Others have regarded it as a vision; and intermediate views have been adopted by many. On one point, fortunately, we may be pretty confident. The substance of the history came from our Lord. The most unfavourable critics allow this, from the extreme difficulty of referring it to any other source. It cannot have been introduced in order to make the Gospel fall in with the Jewish notions of the Messiah, for there are no traditions that the Messiah should be tempted; and if the passage had been devised by men, the drift of it would have been plainer, and the temptations would have been such as men would feel might have come upon themselves. We have many accounts, in the legends of the saints, of the sort of trials which present themselves to the imagination of human writers; and they differ totally from these.

That Satan should have appeared in a bodily form is, to my mind, opposed to the spirituality of all our Lord's teaching. Such an appearance presents endless difficulties, not only physical but moral. If our Lord knew the tempter to be Satan, He was, as I have said, forearmed; if He did not know him, that introduces other difficulties. He must at any rate have been surprised at meeting a specious sophist in the wilderness. Milton deals with the subject with great skill, from his point of view, in *Paradise Regained.* Certain points he leaves unexplained, and those I believe to be inexplicable. They are these. I cannot understand that our Lord should suffer Satan to transport Him to the mountain top, or to the pinnacle of the Temple, or that the Evil One should propose to Jesus to fall down and worship him.

I can, however, readily comprehend that our Lord should represent under this imagery and under these personifications what had passed within Himself. He could not indeed bring the lesson home to His hearers in any other way. To have represented mental emotions, to have spoken of the thoughts that passed through His mind, would have been wholly unsuited to His hearers. We know how difficult it is to keep up an interest in a record of inward struggles and experiences. Men want something to present to their mind's eye, and they soon weary of following an account of what has been going on within a man's heart, void of outward incident. A recital of what had passed in our Lord's mind would have taken no hold of men's fancy, and would soon have faded from their thoughts. But the figure of Satan would catch their eye, the appearance of contest would animate the hearer's interest; while the survey of the realms of the earth, and the dizzy station on the pinnacle of the Temple, would take possession of men's memories and minds.[1]

¶ The Apologue was to Orientals a favourite vehicle for conveying moral lessons; and we have a familiar instance in English Literature of the attraction of allegory. Would Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* have possessed itself, as it has done, of the hearts of whole sections of the British race, if, shorn of its human characters and its scenery, it had only analysed and depicted the inward conflicts, the mental vicissitudes and religious difficulties of a sorely-tried Christian youth?[2]

¶ It is wise not to allow this matter to assume an exaggerated importance. For to suppose such angelic appearances and communications as are related in the early chapters of St. Luke to be imaginative outward representations of what were in fact but merely inward communications of the "divine word" to human souls, is both a possible course and one which is quite consistent with accepting the narrative as substantially historical and true. No one who believes in God and His dealings with men, and who accepts the testimony of all the prophets as to "the word of the Lord" coming to them, can doubt the reality of substantive Divine communications to man of a purely inward sort. Such an inward communication is recorded in these chapters to have been made to Elisabeth, and the angelic appearances to Joseph, recorded by St. Matthew, are merely inward occurrences, *i.e.* they are intimations conveyed to his mind in sleep. No one, moreover,

[1] Henry Latham. [2] *Ibid.*

who knows human nature, can doubt that such inward communications could be easily transformed by the imagination into outward forms.[1]

ii. The Existence of Spiritual Beings.

There can be no *a priori* objection against the existence of such spiritual beings, good and bad, as angels and devils. Many of us would say that the phenomena of temptation, as experienced by ourselves, cannot be interpreted without a belief at least in the latter. Above all, our Lord's language certainly reaches the level of positive teaching about good, and still more about bad, spirits. As regards good spirits, not only does His language constantly associate angels with Himself in the coming and judicial work of the last day, but He talks of them with explicit distinctness as beholding the face of God, as limited in knowledge of the great day, as without sensual natures, as attached to children, ministering to the souls of the dead, attendant upon Himself at His request. As regards evil spirits, He must Himself have related His own temptation to His disciples, in which the personal agency of Satan is vividly presented. He speaks with great simplicity of the devil as disseminating evil and hindering good. He warns Peter of an explicit demand made by him upon the souls of the apostles. He deals with demons with unmistakable seriousness, emphasis, and frequency. He sees Satan behind moral and physical evil. He looks out upon the antagonism to good which the world presents, and says, "An enemy hath done this." He recognises the approach of evil spirits in the trial of the Passion. But He knows that the power of the forces of evil is really overthrown and their doom certain.

The present writer, then, does not see how doubt about the existence and action of good and bad spirits is compatible with a real faith in Jesus Christ as the absolutely trustworthy teacher. There is nothing contrary to reason in such a belief. That it should have been associated with a vast amount of superstition and credulity is no more an argument against its

[1] Bishop Gore.

validity than against religion as a whole. No one can deny that, in our Lord's case, the teaching which He gave about spirits is guarded from superstition by His teaching about God and human responsibility.[1]

¶ Evil thoughts come to us which are alien from all our convictions and all our sympathies. There is nothing to account for them in our external circumstances or in the laws of our intellectual life. We abhor them and repel them, but they are pressed upon us with cruel persistency. They come to us at times when their presence is most hateful; they cross and trouble the current of devotion; they gather like thick clouds between our souls and God, and suddenly darken the glory of the Divine righteousness and love. We are sometimes pursued and harassed by doubts which we have deliberately confronted, examined, and concluded to be absolutely destitute of force, doubts about the very existence of God, or about the authority of Christ, or about the reality of our own redemption. Sometimes the assaults take another form. Evil fires which we thought we had quenched are suddenly rekindled by unseen hands; we have to renew the fight with forms of moral and spiritual evil which we thought we had completely destroyed.[2]

iii. The Personality of the Tempter.

The assertion of the existence of a Tempter at all, of a personal Wicked One, of the devil, this, as is well known, is a stumblingblock to many. Not urging here the extent to which the veracity of Christ Himself is pledged to the fact, I will content myself with observing that it is not by Scriptural arguments alone that it is supported. There is a dark, mysterious element in man's life and history which nothing else can explain. We can only too easily understand the too strong attractions of the objects of sense on a being who is sensuous as well as spiritual; the allowing of that lower nature, which should have been the ruled, to reverse the true relation, and to become the ruler. We can understand only too easily man's yielding, even his losing, of himself in the region of sense. But there is a mystery far more terrible than this, a phenomenon unintelligible except upon one assumption.

All who shrink from looking down into the abysmal depths

[1] Bishop Gore. [2] R. W. Dale, *Lectures on the Ephesians*, p. 422.

of man's fall, because they have no eye for the heavenly heights of his restoration, or for the mighty powers of God that are at work to bring this about, seem to count that much will have been gained by casting out Satan; although it may be very pertinently asked, as indeed one *has* asked, What is the profit of getting rid of the *devil*, so long as the *devilish* remains? of explaining away an Evil *One*, so long as the evil *ones* who remain are so many?[1]

Men don't believe in a devil now,
As their fathers used to do;
They've forced the door of the broadest creed
To let his majesty through;
There isn't a print of his cloven foot,
Or a fiery dart from his bow,
To be found in earth or air to-day,
For the world has voted so.

But who is mixing the fatal draft
That palsies heart and brain,
And loads the earth of each passing year
With ten hundred thousand slain?
Who blights the bloom of the land to-day
With the fiery breath of hell,
If the devil isn't and never was?
Won't somebody rise and tell?

Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint,
And digs the pits for his feet?
Who sows the tares in the field of time
Wherever God sows His wheat?
The devil is voted not to be,
And of course the thing is true;
But who is doing the kind of work
The devil alone should do?

We are told he does not go about
As a roaring lion now;
But whom shall we hold responsible
For the everlasting row
To be heard in home, in Church, in State,
To the earth's remotest bound,
If the devil, by a unanimous vote,
Is nowhere to be found?

[1] Archbishop Trench.

Won't somebody step to the front forthwith,
And make his bow and show
How the frauds and the crimes of the day spring up?
For surely we want to know.
The devil was fairly voted out,
And of course the devil is gone;
But simple people would like to know
Who carries his business on.[1]

1. There are three distinct ways of proving the personality of Satan.

(1) First of all there is the Biblical way. For those who are willing to accept the plain teaching of Scripture there is no need of going further. For this Book plainly teaches both his personal existence and his great activity and power. But for those who are not content to accept these teachings there are two other independent sources of evidence. And each of them is quite conclusive in itself, to the earnest, seeking man.

(2) There is the philosophical evidence. That is to say, there is no power apart from personality. That can be put down as a purely philosophical proposition. There may be manifestations of power without the personality being seen or recognised. That is very common. There cannot be power apart from an intelligence originating and directing it. And certainly there is an evil power in the world. That is plainly felt and recognised everywhere. Now that presence of an evil power argues plainly the personality of an evil being actively at work behind the scenes.

(3) There is still a third line of approach quite distinct from these two, and as irresistible in itself. That is the experimental, or the evidence that comes through experience. Let a man who has been yielding to temptation try to quit; let a man try to cut with the sin he has been indulging; and he will at once become aware that he has a real fight on his hands. He will become conscious of a real power attacking him with terrific force. About that the man himself will have no doubt. It will come with peculiar force, and drive, and cunning subtlety. It will hang on with great tenacity and persistence.[2]

[1] Alfred J. Hough. [2] S. D. Gordon.

2. Very remarkable is the prominence which Satan assumes in the New Testament, compared with the manner in which he and the whole doctrine concerning him is kept in the background in the Old. In the *Old Testament*, after the first appearance of the adversary in Paradise, which even itself is a veiled appearance, he is withdrawn for a long while altogether from the scene; there is but a glimpse of him, a passing indication here and there of such a spiritual head of the kingdom of evil, through the whole earlier economy (as in Job i. and ii., Zech. iii. 1, 2, and 1 Chron. xxi. 1). He is only twice referred to in the Apocrypha (Wisd. ii. 24; Ecclus. xxi. 27). This may partly be explained by an analogy drawn from things natural, namely, that where the lights are brightest, the shadows are the darkest. Height and depth are correlatives of one another. It is right that first reveals wrong; and hate can be read as hate only in the light of love, and unholiness in the light of purity; and thus it needed the highest revelation of good to show us the deepest depth of evil. But this does not explain the reticence of Scripture altogether. No doubt in that childhood of the human race men were not yet ripe for this knowledge. For as many as took it in earnest, and as it deserves to be taken, for them it would have been too dreadful thus to know of a prince of the powers of darkness, until they had known first of a Prince of Light. Those, therefore, who are under a Divine education are not allowed to understand anything very distinctly of Satan, till with the spiritual eye it is given to them to behold him as lightning fallen from heaven; then, indeed, but not till then, the Scripture speaks of him plainly and without reserve.[1]

In the *New Testament* there is not one single writer who does not speak of Satan and his work, not so much in the way of insisting on his existence, as, taking this for granted, building thereon exhortations and warnings. St. Peter bids us "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." St. Jude looks back to the fall of the angels. They were not always devils, they were created good; they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." St. James, the most practical of New Testament writers, bids us "Resist the devil, and he will

[1] Archbishop Trench.

flee from you," just as he tells us, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." The one is as real and personal a being as the other. St. Paul, the philosopher of the New Testament, tells us that our real conflict is not with flesh and blood, not with fallen human nature in ourselves or in society around us, but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Behind the flesh, stirring up its unruly appetites; behind the world, organising it in independence of God, or spreading out its fascinations to bewilder and beguile us, the Apostle recognises the prince of this world. St. John, the theologian, declares the object of the Incarnation, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"; and he goes on to distinguish between the children of God and the children of the devil by their moral likeness and affinity to the source from which they derive their spiritual character. "He that committeth sin," he declares, "is of the devil."

What is most remarkable is that it is in the pages of the *Gospels* and from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself that we are told most about the evil one, that we have the fullest and clearest teaching on this subject. This doctrine is taught in the parables, those earthly stories with a heavenly, spiritual meaning. In the very first parable, that of the Sower, the first reason assigned why the seed sown brings forth no fruit is because the birds of the air, which our Lord explains to represent the devil and his angels, snatch away the seed. In the parable of the Tares sown among the wheat, it is said, "An enemy hath done this"; the devil seeks, if he cannot destroy the truth, to pervert it. Many of our Lord's miracles and works of mercy were the putting forth of Divine power to free those who had fallen under the influence of evil spirits, to restore them to their own self-control and self-possession. He tells His disciples the effect of the setting up of His Kingdom. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Speaking of His coming Passion, our Lord says, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He shall try Me at every point, but he shall find My will unswerving in its allegiance to My Father. Our Lord describes the character of the devil: he was a murderer from the

beginning, and a liar, murdering souls by the seduction of his lies.

¶ If the Gospels trustworthily reflect His mind, nothing else than the conception of a personal will underlies the way in which Jesus uniformly spoke of the Evil One. To Him it was a will actively antagonistic to the will of the Father and His own will; one which rules and disposes, desires and purposes, and which as a will can touch the wills of men. Towards this will His attitude is one of uncompromising and irreconcilable hostility, and is incomparably summed up in the apostolic words, He partook of human nature "that he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." To His eye the Ministry was a war against Satan come down to conflict in all his lightning splendour; but He was conscious of having authority, and of capacity to bestow authority, "over all the power of the enemy," a term (τοῦ ἐχθροῦ) which is itself evidence of the conception of a personal will. This "prince of this world" is to be dethroned; and Christ Himself, "if lifted up from the earth," is to draw all men to Himself. So Christ moves through the Ministry as the stronger than the strong man fully armed, to establish the Kingdom of heaven. The resoluteness of this attitude is heightened by His facing from first to last the fact that this "bringing to nought" the devil is to be effected at supreme cost to Himself—"through death"—and a season of apparent triumph of "the power of darkness." But He stands as one who has counted the cost, and whose purpose towards the hostile will is irrevocably fixed.[1]

3. It may relieve some minds if we tell ourselves with regard to this that it is not necessary to believe in the bodily appearance of Satan to our Lord. Indeed the belief in such is largely due to the impression on the imagination of the efforts of painting and poetry to reproduce this scene, and is in no wise required by the narrative itself. Yet we must not allow such needful reminders to weaken our appreciation of the power which Jesus encountered in His loneliness. To Jesus, evil was a force and an intention outside of man, though it had its allies within him. It was a power bigger than man himself could breed; which hungered for the souls of men, and could finally have them for its own with the same absoluteness as He, the Son of God and Saviour of the world, longed to make them His. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he

[1] H. J. C. Knight.

might sift you as wheat." Jesus said this from His own experience of the subtlety and covetousness of evil. In the earthly life of our Lord there are no moments so intense as those in which He felt the attempts of evil upon Himself. And it was out of this horror that, in spite of all His illustrations of the necessity and Divine uses of temptation, He bade His disciples pray not to be led into it.[1]

iv. His Presence and Work.

1. Consider some of the evidences that any one may recognise as proofs of Satan's presence and work.

(1) Think of that mystery of iniquity, so to speak, in the sudden injection of evil thoughts, when no point of connection can be traced, no unguarded talk, or want of watch over the eyes. Yet horrid thoughts of blasphemy and unbelief, of impurity and rebellion and hatred, assail the soul at some sacred time, perhaps of prayer or Communion, when we would give anything to be free therefrom. "An enemy hath done this."

(2) Think of the mystery of iniquity in the stirring up of curiosity, that so fruitful cause of evil, in a child's mind, the invention of evil in a heart that was fenced against its entrance. Why should that book, that column in the newspaper, exert such a fascinating attraction? Whence this passionate desire to know both good and evil? Again, "an enemy hath done this."

(3) Think of that further and more awful mystery of iniquity in the propagation of evil, when men and women, knowing in their own experience the misery of sin, of scepticism, it may be, or drink, or lust, seek to spread its influence and to blight others' lives. Do you believe they do this simply of their own accord? Is it not at least as reasonable to suppose that they are used as instruments by one to whom they have sold themselves, that, having yielded to powers of evil, those powers claim their service? The tempted and fallen are used in turn to tempt others.

(4) Consider the chains of ignorance, the bonds of prejudice, in which not only heathen nations are fettered, but which keep back so many of our own countrymen from recognising the

[1] Principal George Adam Smith.

truth, so that, while rejecting the sweet reasonableness of the Christian faith as a badge of credulity, they take up with silly superstitions like those of Mormonism or Spiritualism. Is it not reasonable to recognise here the working of a lying spirit propagating error, instilling prejudices and misunderstanding, blinding the mind to the truth?

(5) Once more, the experience of those who are earnest in the service of God bears the mark of the intervention of an enemy who carefully and persistently manipulates temptation, and adjusts it to the special weakness of each person, to his circumstances and environment, to his disposition and temperament. We do not catch a sin as we catch a fever; there is an adjustment and dexterous arrangement of temptation that tells to the thoughtful mind of a personal spiritual foe who is constantly on the watch to ruin souls, seeking to mar God's handiwork and thwart His purposes.[1]

¶ It was cleverly said by a French priest to a young man who accosted him in a patronising tone with the question, "Surely, sir, you don't believe in the devil?" "Thank God I do, for otherwise I should have to believe myself to be a devil."

We all know the despair which successive submissions to temptation fasten upon the soul; and how, yielding to sin, men fall into a state of mind in which evil feels not only real and powerful, but indeed more real than anything else: the only possibility for them, the only thing with any reality left in it. One who had fallen very far into sin wrote thus of it:—

They say that poison-sprinkled flowers
Are sweeter in perfume,
Than when, untouched by deadly dew,
They glowed in early bloom.

They say that men condemned to die
Have quaffed the sweetened wine
With higher relish than the juice
Of the untampered vine.

And I believe the devil's voice
Sinks deeper in our ear
Than any whisper sent from Heaven,
However sweet and clear.

[1] A. C. A. Hall.

2. All through the New Testament Satan is spoken of as an agent of evil to the body as well as to the soul. Our trials and tribulations, as well as our enticements to sin, are attributed to his malice. Our Lord Himself employs language which at least implies His acquiescence in this belief of His day: "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke xiii. 16). St. Paul uses similar language to describe his "thorn in the flesh," doubtless a bodily ailment (2 Cor. xii. 7): "And lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." This idea is equally implied in the same Apostle's language (1 Cor. v. 5) in speaking of excommunication: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Here "to deliver up to Satan" means to expose them to the peril of physical hurt and misfortune, unhelped and unprotected by the prayers and sacraments of the Church, so that by fear and chastisement they may be brought to repentance. And this further explains 1 Tim. i. 20: "Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan" (*i.e.* have excommunicated) "that they may learn not to blaspheme." Even plainer still is the same meaning in 1 Thess. ii. 18, where St. Paul is excusing his delay in revisiting Thessalonica: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." The hindrances that occurred, whether they arose out of sickness or other external circumstances, are set down to the malice of Satan, who was always for obstructing so good a cause.[1]

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"[2]

[1] E. L. Hicks.

[2] R. Browning.

IV.

The Wild Beasts.

"He was with the wild beasts."

When our Lord was in the wilderness, He was not only tempted of Satan, but, as the evangelist takes pains to tell us, He "was with the wild beasts." How far was He in danger from them? How far was He conscious of them? What share did they have in His great temptation? The fact that their presence is noted forbids us to regard Him as entirely indifferent to them. During the day they might be neither seen nor heard.

> The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
> And lay down in their dens.

But—

> Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
> Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth

Faint, shadowy forms pass by, gleams of otherwise unperceived light are focussed and reflected from strangely luminous eyes, stealthy movements may be just detected by the strained ear, and the night trembles with distant howlings, or is perhaps startled by the hideous shriek of some jackal close at hand. How was He who had been driven of the Spirit into the wilderness affected by these sounds and sights? Did He think of these "wild beasts" as imperilling His safety, as we should probably have done had we, unhoused, unguarded, without companions, been spending the hours of darkness in the desert wastes?

¶ What were they? In referring to Kuser Hajla, near Jericho, Tristram says: "In its gorge we found a fine clump of date palms,—one old tree, and several younger ones clustered round it, apparently unknown to recent travellers, who state that the last palm tree has lately perished from the plains of Jericho. Near these palm trees, in the thick cover, we came upon the lair of a leopard or cheetah, with a well-beaten path, and the broad, round, unmistakable footmarks quite fresh, and evidently not more than a few hours old. However, the beast was not at

home for us. Doubtless it was one of these that M. de Saulcy took for the footprints of a lion. But inasmuch as there is no trace of the lion having occurred in modern times, while the others are familiar and common, we must be quite content with the leopard. Everywhere around us were the fresh traces of beasts of every kind; for two days ago a great portion of the plain had been overflowed. The wild boar had been rooting and treading on all sides; the jackals had been hunting in packs over the soft oozy slime; the solitary wolf had been prowling about; and many foxes had singly been beating the district for game. The hyena, too, had taken his nocturnal ramble in search of carcases. None of these, however, could we see."[1] When in the Wady Hamâm, again, in the district of Gennesaret, he says: "We never met with so many wild animals as on one of these days. First of all, a wild boar got out of some scrub close to us, as we were ascending the valley. Then a deer was started below; ran up the cliff, and wound along the ledge, passing close to us. Then a large ichneumon almost crossed my feet, and ran into a cleft; and while endeavouring to trace him, I was amazed to see a brown Syrian bear clumsily but rapidly clamber down the rocks and cross the ravine. While working the ropes above, we could see the gazelles tripping lightly at the bottom of the valley, quite out of reach and sight of our companions at the foot of the cliff. Mr. Lowne, who was below, saw an otter, which came out of the water and stood and looked at him for a minute with surprise."[2]

¶ In Rome, in the catacomb of S. Callixtus, there is a painting of Orpheus, and round him are depicted the wild beasts, tamed and hushed to listen while he plays. Though the representation is an uncommon one, it is generally agreed on all sides that its subject is really our Blessed Lord. The assumption is that the artist, though on every side of him there were evidences of what following Christ meant, though perhaps in his ears was still ringing the cry "The Christians to the lions," was so possessed with the idea of the love and protecting power of Him whom he owned as his Lord, that he painted Him as sitting unharmed though surrounded by wild beasts. His thoughts possibly went back to the old days when he had himself stood among the howling mob who, on a "Roman Holiday," had seen some poor Christian writhing in utter isolation in the midst of the amphitheatre during that awful moment before the beasts were let loose upon their victims; and now, not knowing how soon his own turn might come to experience the same ordeal, he depicted for his own encouragement Christ sitting among the wild beasts. A writer in

[1] Tristram, *The Land of Israel*, 245. [2] *Ibid.*, 451.

the *Spectator* (H. C. Minchin, 13th December 1902) describes with vivid power what must frequently have been in such a man's mind:—

> The ranks are crowded, tier on tier,
> And midst them in my place am I,
> As oft before; we talk and jeer,
> Waiting to see yon captive die
> Who in the arena stands alone:
> He turns his face—I see my own!
>
> 'Tis I that wait the roar and rush
> When bars are raised; 'tis I that fall
> Upon my knees, amid the hush
> Of cruel tongues, on Christ to call;
> Upon whose parted lips the while
> There breaks a glad triumphant smile.

Some points deserve attention in this unexpected but most interesting statement that He was with the wild beasts.

1. *His Recognition of their Presence.*—It was the sudden perception of a soul in stress of conflict. Relaxing one moment from its intense agony, it saw, gathered around, the wild beasts of the desert. It remembered them in its after-thoughts on the deadly struggle with more terrible foes.

¶ Can we recall experiences like this in our own life battle? At night, in a great suspense, when the soul is sick, blind, helpless, and the forces of being are warring with one another, there has come a momentary change of mood. The carving of some picture-frame, a face hung on the wall, the blazonry on some book, the chance phrase on an open page—trifles like these fasten themselves on our minds. We turn dully from them, but the impression is ineffaceable. Even when the memory of the trial grows dim, it is they that keep it living.

Or we have sought under a sudden blow to escape from "the world's grey soul to the green world." On the hillside or the moor we have sat with bowed heads and downcast eyes. It seemed as if we had outlived all loves, buried all hopes. Yet through some chink the flower at our feet enters into the heart, mingles with our thought, and strangely belies our misery. The cup passes from us, and again, again we live. These hours change us, but their memory clings round that single thing: the flower which we never see without the whole sorrow and relief returning. As Rossetti has expressed it in his poem, "The Woodspurge"—

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among these few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.[1]

¶ Above the altar the antique glass of the East Window contained a figure of the Saviour of an early and severe type. The form was gracious and yet commanding. . . . Kneeling upon the half-pace, as he received the sacred bread and tasted the holy wine, this gracious figure entered into his soul, and stillness and peace unspeakable, and life, and light, and sweetness filled his mind. He was lost in a sense of rapture, and earth and all that surrounded him faded away. When he returned a little to himself, kneeling in his seat in the church, he thought that at no period of his life, however extended, should he ever forget that morning, or lose the sense and feeling of that touching scene, of that gracious figure over the altar, of the bowed and kneeling figures, of the misty autumn sunlight and the sweeping autumn wind. Heaven itself seemed to have opened to him, and one fairer than the fairest of the angelic hosts to have come down to earth.[2]

2. *Was He afraid of them?*—"Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." Here for all time is the reprobation of physical fear, of mere cowardice in Christians; here, too, is the commendation of a right fear, "the fear of God" in the Old Testament sense, which flies from evil suggestion, which shrinks from dishonouring Him, a fear which is the realisation of both the holiness and the power of the Supreme Being. If there is one passage in the Lord's

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll. [2] J. H. Shorthouse, *John Inglesant.*

life more than another where we may in all reverence associate such fear with His Person, it would be the occasion of His temptation in the wilderness. Fear is an essential factor in any real temptation. Of physical fear during that time our Lord knew nothing; the words, "He was with the wild beasts" point conclusively to this; but that He felt a godly fear during the awful contest seems plain, though this was cast out, in the issue, by the triumph of a perfect love.

I'll to the wilderness, and can
Find beasts more mercifull than man;
He liv'd there safe, 'twas his retreat
From the fierce Jew, and Herod's heat;
And forty dayes withstood the fell
And high temptations of hell;
With Seraphims there talked he,
His father's flaming ministrie;
He heav'n'd their walks, and with his eyes
Made those wild shades a Paradise.
Thus was the desert sanctified
To be the refuge of his bride.[1]

3. *Had He not much sympathy with the wild beasts?*—"Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." One who would entertain such a thought could not be without sympathy towards the dumb creatures. The fox is not a particularly lovable beast; yet the compassionate heart of Christ could enter into the grateful sense of home comfort which banished its brute cares and soothed its savage breast, as it crept into its "hole" for shelter and for rest. He had seen it slink out of sight, but sympathy had made His human heart bolder than His eye, and it, unseen and pitying, had tracked the poor beast to its inmost den. I do not know if anywhere this touching sympathy with "animals unhuman" finds better expression than in these lines of Burns—

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor Labour sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or, thro' the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl;

[1] Henry Vaughan.

List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing!
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you, on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,—
The blood-stained roost and sheep-cote spoil'd
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

"This poem," said no less a critic than Thomas Carlyle, "is worth several homilies on 'Mercy'; for it is the voice of Mercy herself." And need I point out that the germ of that poem lies embedded in the sympathetic words of our Lord, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests"?[1]

¶ The impression that this touch in the picture conveys to me is rather of desolate isolation. I think of Him enduring a severe struggle, in which sympathy and ministry would have been comfort and help inestimable, conscious of being surrounded by creatures which have no interest in His thought, no sympathy with His feeling—creatures which, if attacked or aroused, would doubtless show themselves conscious of His presence and prove dangerous; but, being unmolested, simply avoid Him, wander by Him in unconcerned indifference. The laugh of the hyena proclaims and emphasises the lack of sympathy on the part of the wilderness world with the strife and the tragedy of the temptation.[2]

¶ My wilderness, in which I have learned a little of the meaning of this unsympathetic environment, has perhaps been the darkened house before which the world's traffic has rattled, within sight of which the children have played, and on the roof

[1] H. Rose Rae. [2] A. J. Bamford.

of which the sparrows have twittered as though no home had been made desolate.

> In the hush'd chamber, sitting by the dead,
> It grates on us to hear the flood of life
> Whirl rustling onward, senseless of our loss.[1]

¶ In the cave of Gouda dwelt Clement the hermit. By prayers, washings, flagellation, labours, he fought his temptations. Yet his despair deepened and his soul was well-nigh sped with the torment of temptation. But one morning, awaking from a deep, prolonged sleep, Clement held his breath. He half closed his eyes lest they should frighten the airy guest. Down came robin on the floor . . . he was on the hermit's bare foot. Clement closed his eyes and scarce drew his breath in fear of frightening and losing his visitor. "Now, bless thee, sweet bird," sighed the stricken solitary; "thy wings are music, and thou a feathered ray camedst to light my darkened soul." And so the days rolled on; and the weather got colder, and Clement's despondency was passing away. And presently his cell seemed illuminated with joy. His work pleased him; his prayers were full of unction; his psalms of praise. Hosts of little birds followed their crimson leader. And one keen frosty night, as he sang the praises of God to his tuneful psaltery, and his hollow cave rang forth the holy psalmody upon the night, he heard a clear whine, not unmelodious; it became louder and less in tune. He peeped through the chinks of his rude door, and there sat a great red wolf moaning melodiously with his nose high in the air.

Clement was rejoiced. "My sins are going," he cried, "and the creatures of God are owning me, one after another." And in a burst of enthusiasm he struck up the laud:

> "Praise Him all ye creatures of His!
> Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

And all the time he sang the wolf bayed at intervals.[2]

4. *Did He not look upon them as sharers in the curse He had come to remove?*—Did He not see in their eyes an appeal from their misery? Was He not quick to behold the earnest expectation of the creatures waiting for the manifestation of the Son of God? Did He not long for the day which Esaias saw in vision, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and

[1] A. J. Bamford.

[2] Charles Reade, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, chap. xciii.

the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the basilisk's den, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain,—that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? We cannot tell; but surely the wild beasts were to Him as they will be to all in the regeneration. Even yet some men exercise strange powers over them; and when He, the creating Word, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, beheld them in His dumb agony, did they not cease one moment to groan and to travail, as if they saw their hope in His grief?[1]

5. *The wild beasts are with us in all our temptations.*—We need to take into account the magnitude of our exposure to the wild beasts. The tendency is to make a careless reckoning. St. Mark's term "wild beasts" is a strong one, but none too strong to represent the facts. The unfriendly agencies that are about us are pitiless as the wild beasts. How often we find them destructive, dark, revolting, cruel, and deadly! The error of youth is to clothe the lion in sheepskin and the wolf in lamb's wool.

What have the Scriptures to say concerning the "wild beasts"? The Book of Genesis opens the first account. Our first parents had to wage war with the serpent. Innocency was defeated by a wild beast. None of the heroes of the far-off ages of Abraham and Moses were free from the conflict. Daniel had his exposure to the wild beasts; but the lions in the den were as lambs compared with those that had their shelter in the king's palace in the hearts of the king's courtiers. Isaiah's prophetic vision was interrupted by the growl of "the wolf, the leopard, the young lion and the bear"; but he saw the eternal highway called Holiness along which no ravenous beast should walk. And if we turn to the New Testament and have a moment's interview with such men as St. Peter, we shall hear them say, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." And St. Paul's experience is the same. Even in his beautiful Philippian Epistle he com-

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

mands the saints to "beware of the dogs." And lastly the Saviour, when sending forth His seventy disciples, did not forget to warn them with the words, "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves."

¶ J. M. Barrie has a beautiful chapter in *Margaret Ogilvy*, entitled, "How my Mother got her Soft Face." It is a suggestive exposition of a sweetness of life that came through suffering and bereavement. The "wild beasts" tear our life and strive for the mastery, but we have the angel ministry to keep the soul in perfect peace. And in our day we have a great example in General Booth. What has he not suffered from the "wild beasts"? What shall we say of the hate and malice and persecution that he has borne? He has been in the wilderness with the foes and come out more than conqueror. It is the same story in each case, and apostles, martyrs, saints, humble mothers, and all sacrificial and sainted lives are proof of it.[1]

V.

The Ministering Angels.

"And the angels ministered unto him."

One hardly thinks of the angels as indigenous to the wilderness, as are the hyenas and jackals, the lions and serpents. These heavenly ministrants were there because Jesus was there. It was He that peopled the wilderness with angels. They were there to minister to Him. And if there, where may they not be? The devil and the wild beasts and the angels followed our Lord into the Temple and along the hillsides and by the shore of the sea. He had ever to reckon with the hostility of those who understood enough to see that their gains were imperilled. He had ever to endure the keen grief of being incomprehensible to many whom He pitied, loved, and sought to serve, upon whose feelings His enemies could play, making them the tools of their enmity. He had ever to feel the chill of the cold indifference of those who neither knew nor cared. But He rejoiced ever in the truth of the words which the devil had sought to make the means of His destruction:—

[1] F. R. Brunskill.

"He shall give His angels charge over Thee,
To keep Thee in all Thy ways.
They shall bear Thee up in their hands,
Lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

1. We find here, therefore, the "Son of Man," man as God meant Him to be, the ideal man of the Psalms, standing in suggestive environment—between the savage animals on the one hand, and the holy angels on the other, freely recognised and served by both—"with the wild beasts," and at the same time "ministered unto by angels." It is to be noticed that this same strange and remarkable association of man with the higher and lower orders of beings had already appeared in the Psalms. The same Psalm (xci.) which promises, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways," goes on immediately to add, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet" (vers. 11–13). And very similarly in Ps. viii., "Thou hast made him [but] a little lower than the angels," is followed by "Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field" (vers. 5–7).

¶ Thus, what in a special manner proved true of the Incarnate Son of Man is in a measure and in a certain sense true of every son of man in his degree. We *all* stand between the wild beasts and the holy angels. The angelic will not let us sink utterly to the brutal, nor the brutal let us soar altogether with the angelic. And so we are in a strait betwixt two. But these elements preponderate differently in different men.

Some, like beasts, their senses' pleasure take;
And some, like angels, doe contemplate still.
Therefore the fables turned some men to flowres,
And others did with brutish formes inuest;
And did of others make celestiall powers,
Like angels, which still trauell, yet still rest.[1]

It may be true, says Dr. A. Smythe Palmer, that only by a slow development and evolution man passed out of the highest rank of animals into the lowest rank of humanity. It may be that sin is in some particulars a relic of heredity, an undestroyed residuum of his old animal stage—still, a spark of the Divine is glowing in him, the breath of God is stirring in him; his progress is ever upwards towards the angels.

[1] Sir J. Davies, *Nosce Teipsum*.

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute.

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.[1]

The idea of *angels* is usually treated as fanciful. Imaginative it is, but not altogether fanciful; and though the physical appearance and attributes of such imaginary beings may have been over-emphasised or misconceived, yet facts known to me indicate that we are not really lonely in our struggle, that our destiny is not left to haphazard, that there is no such thing as *laissez faire* in a highly organised universe. Help may be rejected, but help is available; a ministry of benevolence surrounds us—a cloud of witnesses—not witnesses only but helpers, agents like ourselves of the immanent God.

Hidden as they are to our present senses, poets can realise their presence in moments of insight, can become aware of their assistance in periods of dejection—dejection which else would be despair. So it has been with one and another of the band of poets who, stranded and unknown in a great city, have felt the sting of poverty; to them at times have the heavens opened, the everyday surroundings have become transfigured,—as Cheapside was, in Wordsworth's poem, at the song of the thrush,—and, to the vision of Francis Thompson, angels have ascended and descended in the very streets of London:—

> But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
> Cry;—and upon thy sore loss
> Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
> Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.[2]

[1] Tennyson.

[2] Oliver Lodge, *Reason and Belief*, 43.

2. In what ways may their ministry be thought of?

(1) *They supplied His bodily wants.*—The angels ministered to Christ; they brought Him that which He needed. Perhaps the truth to be learned is that when the unlawful gratification of the desires of our nature is resisted, the lawful gratification is a Divine thing. We feel that Heaven is giving it to us to enjoy. Or perhaps the truth is, that when we resist unlawful pleasures, God compensates us by sending into our souls, through His heavenly messengers, Divine joys and a spiritual fulness. It is sweet to have resisted temptation; the mind is filled with a heavenly satisfaction.

¶ When we have carried on a long struggle, and have been pinched or in distress, and have felt as if we must give way, and have been upheld only by naming God every hour, saying God is able, God will not fail us; then, when the relief comes at last, there is a strange sense that it has come direct from God. Angels come and minister to us. The joy of resisting temptation is the highest joy man can feel. It is a moment when our little life here grows larger, and we feel ourselves lifted into a wider sphere; we have a sense of fellowship with higher beings, and are somehow conscious of their sympathy. All God's creation smiles upon us, and appears made for our joy. Every pore of our nature seems opened, and there rushes into us a stream of joys that lifts us into another world. At such moments angels do minister unto us.[1]

¶ It is probable that on this occasion they brought food (cf. 1 Kings xix. 5); the word in the original (διηκόνουν) may imply as much; and that word, "Man did eat angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 25), may have thus received its highest fulfilment; nor less may they have celebrated with songs of triumph this transcendent victory of the kingdom of light over the kingdom of darkness. So much Keble has suggested:

> Nor less your lay of triumph greeted fair
> Our Champion and your King,
> In that first strife, whence Satan in despair
> Sunk down on scathed wing:
> Alone He fasted, and alone He fought;
> But when His toils were o'er,
> Ye to the sacred Hermit duteous brought
> Banquet and hymn, your Eden's festal store.

(2) *They succoured Him in His hour of darkness and depression.*—It is always in His depression that we read of the

[1] A. B. Davidson.

angels coming—in the manger, in the wilderness, in the garden. Why do they come in His depression? Because there is a virtue in depression? Nay, the reverse—because there is a danger in it. God will not let me have a cross without the alabaster box; He fears the effect on me of unqualified pain. There is not in all His providence a night without a star. He plants a flower on every grave, and that flower is the boundary line beyond which grief cannot go.

(3) *They brought Him the fellowship of Heaven.*—So great were the love and desire that welled up in Jesus towards His Father, and so great was the response of God's heart towards Him, that the place where He stood became heaven upon earth, while He stood there held out to God for His embrace. He was kindred with earth, but still more closely kin to Heaven. His call pierced the barriers of separation; the interposing powers of Hell were swept into an instant flight. Deep called to deep; like the flash of lightning between thunder-clouds, the fellowship of God rushed to meet the welcome of the man Jesus. He claimed it, and in answer it claimed Him.

That is what the coming of the angels means; and thus they came. The tide of heavenly love that rose in Jesus' heart was met by a great tide of kindred love that swelled towards Him out of heaven; and these met in a visible concourse of angelic presences that gathered round the Man who first from earth had chosen, ay, compelled, the full fellowship of God. The angels did not compass the deliverance of Jesus; nor did they merely celebrate it in a pageant of glorious rejoicing. Their presence *was* His victory in its outward showing. In the hour of Satan's majesty and insolent assault, the motions of Heaven were so strong in Jesus, that suddenly and with great strength He grasped the very heart of Heaven and drew it to Himself.

¶ Can we believe that the glory of Heaven was only around Jesus at this time? Nay! It was upon Him and in Him, and shone out from Him. Long afterwards, in agitated prayer to God regarding the trial of the Cross which was before Him, Jesus was suddenly transfigured in company with Moses and Elias, and in the presence of a well-loved three of His disciples. And He was transfigured now, amid that band of bright angels. There was no man there to see and tell of it; and Jesus did not tell such things.

Yet we may see our Lord clothed in transfigured radiancy, and in aspect not inferior to His visitants.[1]

3. The words of the text are better rendered: "Angels came and *were ministering* unto him." The ministry was probably continued throughout the whole of Christ's earthly life. It is reasonable to suppose that He who was made in all things like unto His brethren, and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin, was in all points as we are ministered unto by the angels. Let us remember, however, the marvellous obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, which made Christ unwilling to invoke angel aid that would have been His to command, which made Him say to Peter, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild,
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled,—

Sunbeams scorching all the day,
Chilly dewdrops nightly shed,
Prowling beasts about Thy way,
Stones Thy pillow, earth Thy bed.

Shall we not Thy sorrow share,
And from earthly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Glad with Thee to suffer pain?

And if Satan, vexing sore,
Flesh or spirit should assail,
Thou, his Vanquisher before,
Grant we may not faint nor fail.

So shall we have peace divine;
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us too shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee.[2]

[1] A. Morris Stewart. [2] George H. Smyttan and Francis Pott.

A Model Sermon.

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A Model Sermon.

Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.—i. 14, 15.

Here are the notes of a model sermon. We call the Lord's Prayer the model prayer. This may with equal justice be called the model sermon. It is a sermon that was preached even by our Lord on more occasions than one. It is an example for all the sermons that have been or will be preached thereafter. And although it is only the shortest possible notes of such a sermon, there is much material in it.

Let us take—

I. Its Occasion.
II. Its Place.
III. Its General Topic.
IV. Its Particular Contents.

I.

Its Occasion.

"Now after that John was delivered up."

The Baptism of our Lord was immediately followed by an ecstatic condition of fasting in the wilderness, at the conclusion of which He endured the great Temptation. Returning from the wilderness, He went, under the power of the Spirit, to undertake His ministry in Galilee.

Swete considers that this journey to Galilee was in fact a withdrawal from Judæa, where the tidings of John's imprisonment (Matt.), and still more the growing jealousy of the Pharisees

towards the new Teacher (John iv. 1), rendered a longer stay dangerous or unprofitable. Though Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Antipas, His mission there would not expose Him at first to the tetrarch's interference (cf. Mark vi. 14; Luke xiii. 31 f., xxiii. 8). It was Jerusalem, not Galilee, that shed the blood of the prophets; in any case it was clear that Jerusalem would not tolerate His teaching; Galilee offered a better field (cf. John iv. 45).

¶ The season was the Spring, with its bright heaven, its fresh sweet earth, its gladsome, soft, yet strengthening air, its limpid living water. And within as without all was spring-time, the season of millionfold forces gladly and grandly creative, of sunlight now clear and blithesome, and now veiled with clouds that came only to break into fruitful showers. "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," and Galilee felt and owned the Spirit and the power. In the homes of its peasantry and the hamlets of its fishermen, on the shores of its beautiful sea, in the towns and villages that stood on its banks and were mirrored in its waves, He preached His Gospel.[1]

II.

Its Place.

"Jesus came into Galilee."

Where would you have thought Jesus would have gone to found His Kingdom, to begin His ministry? Why, up there, of course, if He had been an astute man of the world, at Jerusalem. There was the great temple of His people, there the ornate and ancient priesthood, there the extended and venerated worship, there the historical associations of His race and of its King. Was ever city so loved by men as was Jerusalem? Poets praised it, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion. The people had loved it; there Solomon had planted his temple; and there, amid poverty, pain, and war, a few returned exiles had built another and still more gracious; there the people of God had known the siege of the heathen, there they had known the deliverance of the Most High. The great prophet of exile had broken into

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, 99.

immortal poetry in praise of that city where God dwelt, and towards which all nations should come. Athens may be the eye of Greece, illustrious in wisdom; Rome may be the synonym of Imperial and ecclesiastical power; Mecca may speak of a prophet that conquered by the sword, and Benares of caste that rules as with a rod of iron millions of our race; but Jerusalem is pre-eminent as the city of faith, the birth-place of a religion, whose very stones were dear to those that loved her. There, then, it might have seemed, Jesus would begin to exercise His ministry. There were rabbis to listen to Him, there were priests to support Him, there were scribes to report Him; all round it seemed the fit soil for His work.

But nay, though He knew that a prophet must perish in Jerusalem, the ministry that was to be fruitful for all time must be exercised elsewhere. He would not throw His ministry, His soul, into the midst of conflict, while conflict would have soiled the serenity of His soul. He would not seek the men bound to fashion and form and place; He would seek those that would gather round Him, ready to be made by His work. He did not need to nurse human sin; left to itself it would breed passion, create jealousy, make the awful hour of His agony, the awful majesty of His cross. But He had to seek love, nurse it, and cultivate it, and gather it to His bosom, and bear it there. He wanted the silence that was nurture, He wanted the obscurity that was growth, He wanted the cloistered security of Nature, as it were, where His own loved people would learn to know and would learn to love Him, and be made fit to be preachers to all ages and models for all time. Though of humble birth, scorned by the proud of blood and culture, He had the supernal wisdom, and saw in the quiet of His own province the ministry that could be a well of truth and grace.

III.

Its General Topic.

"Preaching the gospel of God."

"The gospel of God"—this is the theme of all Christian preaching. The particular function for which St. Paul says he

is set apart is to preach the gospel of God—"separated," he says, in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, "unto the gospel of God."

1. *The Gospel.*—"The fundamental passage for the use of this word (εὐαγγέλιον)," say Sanday and Headlam in their edition of the *Epistle to the Romans*, "appears to be Mark i. 14, 15." They do not doubt that our Lord Himself described by this term (or its Aramaic equivalent) His announcement of the arrival of the Messianic time. They do not think that the word is borrowed directly from the Septuagint, where it occurs in all only two, or at most three, times, although there may have been some influence from the use of the verb, which is especially frequent in second Isaiah and the Psalms in connection with the news of the Great Deliverance or Restoration from the Captivity. The word evidently took a strong hold on the imagination of St. Paul in connection with his own call to missionary labours. He uses the noun sixty times in his Epistles, while it is used only twice in the rest of the New Testament apart from the Gospels and Acts.

2. *The Gospel of God.*—The Gospel is called the Gospel of Christ in Mark i. 1. Here it is the Gospel of God. The "of," says Swete, probably denotes the source: the Gospel which comes from God, the Gospel of which God (the Father) is the Author and Sender. Every account of the work of Christ, therefore, is false which places the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in contrast to the justice of Almighty God. Christ comes with news, and good news, but He is sent from God with this good news. In this respect, as in every other, He and the Father are one.

IV.

Its Particular Contents.

Its particular contents are the fulness of the time, the nearness of the Kingdom, and the conditions of entrance into it—repentance and faith.

i. The Fulness of the Time.

"The time is fulfilled."

What is *fulfilment*? The fruit is the fulfilment of the bloom, the meridian day is the fulfilment of the dawn. What we mean by the word as it is applied to Christ is, that there was something foreshadowed, and in Him that something was revealed; that on the lip of time there was a whisper and a suggestion, of which Christ was the uttered word; in the fulness of time "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."[1]

1. There was a threefold work of preparation for the coming of the Son of God carried forward in what was then called the civilised world, and each portion of it required the lapse of a certain time.

(1) First, the world was to be prepared politically for His work. In order to spread an idea or a creed, two instruments, if not strictly necessary, are at least desirable. Of these one is a common language, such as the French language was in Europe half a century ago, a language of civilisation, which shall be a means for expressing new thoughts and convictions without subjecting them to misrepresentation by the process of translation. Another is a common social system, common laws, a common government.

(2) There was a second preparation in the convictions of mankind. The heathen nations were not without some religion, which contained, in various degrees, elements of truth, however mingled with or overlaid by errors. But from the first the ancient religions tended to bury God in the visible world which witnessed to Him. The Greeks never knew, in their best days, of a literally Almighty God, still less of a God of love; but it was necessary that their incapacity to retain in their knowledge the little they did know of Him should be proved by experience. Certainly wise men tried to spiritualise the popular language and ideas about God. But the old paganism would not bear such handling; it went to pieces when it was discussed; while philosophy, having no facts to appeal to, but consisting only of "views," could never become a religion and take its

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Divine Challenge*, 78.

place. The consequence was the simultaneous growth of gross superstition and blank unbelief, down to the time of the Incarnation.

(3) There was also a preparation in the moral experience of mankind. There was at times much moral earnestness in the old pagan world. But men were content with being good citizens, which is not necessarily the same thing as being good men. In the eyes of Socrates, for instance, all obligations were discharged if a man obeyed the laws of Athens. "No man," St. Augustine has said, "approached Christianity more nearly than did Plato." Yet Plato tolerated popular vices of the gravest description, and drew a picture of a model state in which there was to be a community of wives. And yet enough survived of moral truth in the human conscience to condemn average pagan practice. Pagans still had, however obscurely, some parts of the Law of God written in their hearts.

2. In the Jewish people, too, a threefold preparation, ending also in a "fulness of time," is certainly not less observable. (1) Politically, the Jews were expecting change; they retained the feelings while they had lost the privileges of a free people; their aspirations looked to a better future, though they mistook its character. The sceptre had departed from Judah: Shiloh would come, they believed, immediately. (2) Their purely religious conviction pointed in the same direction. Prophecy had, in the course of ages, completed its picture of the coming Deliverer. Beginning with the indefinite promise of a deliverance, it had gradually narrowed the fulfilment to a particular race, a particular tribe, a particular family; the birth, the work, the humiliation, the death, the triumph, of the Deliverer had been described by anticipation. There was, consequently, an "expectation of Israel" for which all good men were waiting. (3) But, above all, the Jews underwent a moral preparation for the Son of God. God had given them a Law; in itself "holy, just, and good." But this Law itself pronounced a curse on all who did not keep it. Did the Jews keep it? They had had the experience of centuries; had they ever kept it? were they not as far as ever from keeping it, in any sense which conscience would sanction? They had, no doubt, made a certain number of

technical extracts from it, and these they could obey mechanically. But the moral principles which it contained did not govern their lives. And they knew it. The Law, then, was to them a revelation of weakness and a revelation of sin. It showed them what, in their natural strength, they could not do. Like a lantern carried into a dark chamber of horrors, which was unlighted before, it showed them what they had done. Thus the Law was, in St. Paul's eyes, a confidential servant to whom God had entrusted the education of Israel to bring him to Christ; and this process had just reached completion.[1]

¶ Christ is the centre of the history of the world, and there could be no error in the date of His appearance. The race had proved its inability to restore itself to lost truth, purity, and happiness. Through the discipline of the Mosaic law, and of natural law, Jew and Gentile were prepared for a spiritual, redeeming religion. And the state of the political world corresponded with the exigencies of a universal faith. "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son." Nothing in nature is more wonderful than the way in which complementary things and creatures arrive together; and in history the same phenomenon is repeated. "God's trains never keep one another waiting." Events synchronise and harmonise. The Incarnation is the crowning example of the dramatic unities of history.[2]

ii. The Nearness of the Kingdom.

"The kingdom of God is at hand."

1. *The Kingdom of God.*—The "kingdom of God," as used by our Lord, signified the whole sphere in which the will of God, as an ethical power, is recognised and obeyed. It was the reign of righteousness. The idea was so far traditional; in it the theocracy of Israel, the ideal of the prophets, was still further purified and enlarged. In our Lord's use of it, a certain elasticity is apparent, which is, however, never vagueness. The "kingdom" may be in germ, in process of being realised, or ideally perfect and complete. It has two sides—the intensive, the qualities which distinguish it; and the extensive, the moral

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Advent in St. Paul's*, 118.
[2] W. L. Watkinson, *Ashes of Roses*, 268.

beings whom it includes, and so far as they are under its influence. It is, however, the former much more, and more frequently, than the latter. It is inward, spiritual, invisible, but ever struggling, as it were, towards outward expression and realisation; hence it sometimes appears to be identified with such expression, however inadequate this may yet be. In the future, however, the outward and inward shall correspond. Perhaps what Jesus meant by the "kingdom of God" is best seen from the position He gives it in the Lord's Prayer. God's Kingdom begins when His "name is hallowed," with the turning of the heart in loyalty and devotion towards Him; and is perfected when His "will is done, as in heaven so in earth."[1]

The Kingdom of God or of Heaven was a religious conception which our Lord found in possession of the religious mind of Israel. We are just beginning to learn from a study of the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the first pre-Christian century how entirely our Lord accepted for His teaching the framework of religious ideas current among His own people in His own day. He is distinguished hardly at all from His contemporaries by the form of His teaching. But into the current forms He put a largeness and intensity of meaning which they had not known, which was destined in time to break through and transcend them. It was so exactly with this idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the mind of our Lord's contemporaries it was a somewhat confused medley of at least two conceptions which are really distinct. On the one hand it stood for the completion of the Divine purpose in the world of creation. The final destiny of man and of all created things was seen athwart a great cataclysmic judgment. An ultimate redemptive change would pass upon all things that grow here slowly towards their end, and transform them into the changeless reality which God had always meant for them, which God had always seen in them. The new heavens and the new earth would spring suddenly out of that great fire of judgment by which God would sift and try the world. And confusedly mingled with this conception was that of a slower and more gradual process by which this great change would be prepared. During this process, men, or at least an elect of mankind, would be conscious of a nearer presence of

[1] A. Stewart, in *Expository Times*, iv. 467.

God, of a closer presence of God's redemptive purpose in their affairs. This stage would be already an initiation of the Kingdom of God. It would be marked throughout by an experience of the constant urgency of His judgment, by a growing assurance of the working of His redemptive leaven in the human lump.

Now even here our Lord did not change the forms which He found. He did not seek to disentangle ideas which are at least logically distinct. He, too, sometimes spoke of that completion of human destiny, to be wrought through the sudden whirlwind of a final judgment, as near at hand, as already at the door, as coming within the lifetime of that generation. And again, He spoke of the Kingdom as growing slowly and secretly, as involving a kind of judgment which would leave it to life itself gradually to reveal the evil and the good, which would demand the greatest patience and tolerance lest the good be hindered or even destroyed by a too zealous haste to separate it from the evil. But whichever form He used He made it the vehicle of the definitive and perfect teaching about the nature of God's judgment. Rather, perhaps, if we may dare to speculate, He may have used both these contemporary religious conceptions because they insisted upon different aspects of the Divine judgment which are vitally united in its reality, though we can only think of them or realise them apart—its uncompromisingness and its patience, its absolute character and its gradual process.[1]

¶ The memory of this great idea is kept alive in Christendom by the Lord's Prayer, which has passed into universal use; but the three Creeds, which are supposed to embody the essential features of the Christian religion, take no notice of it. The teaching of the Master appears to be the last thing that occurs to the minds of many Christians; and if they can only pronounce some formula descriptive of His nature and person, they think it superfluous to dwell with loving reverence on the principles which He taught.[2]

2. *The Kingdom of God is at hand.*—This may mean either that the Kingdom is imminent in the sense that it will soon be realised, or it may mean that the Kingdom has drawn near to

[1] A. L. Lilley. [2] James Drummond, *Via, Veritas, Vita*, 123.

men, is now in the midst of men, whether or no they recognise the fact of its present realisation.

The near approach of the Kingdom was what Jesus preached as His "good tidings" to the people, and veritable good tidings it would be to those who believed Him. It was like proclaiming the dawn of "the millennium." John the Baptist had already announced the nearness of God's Kingdom; but it was in its judgment aspect that he proclaimed it; Jesus emphasised its gracious aspect as the coming of salvation. We have no need to go to the later Apocalyptic conceptions for the foundation of this Gospel; we find it in the Old Testament. The prophets had foretold the coming of this Kingdom in "the latter days." Isaiah had pictured it as a time of release to the captive, of justice and consolation to the poor and oppressed, a Jubilee year of "Divine acceptance"; and Jesus declared that it had dawned upon them. "Daniel" had foretold how "the God of Heaven should set up a kingdom" which should never be destroyed, and had seen in vision the government committed to one who "came with the clouds of heaven, like unto a son of man"; he had even given indications of the time when it should appear; Jesus announced that "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand."

But although the Kingdom was approaching, it was not *immediately* at hand. All Christ's teaching implies this, though there is nothing in it that requires the thought of *long* delay. More than once He gave a distinct negative to the expectation that the Kingdom "should immediately appear." He preached repentance and righteousness as its preparation, and He pointed to the powers He was endowed with, through the indwelling Spirit, as a proof of His commission, and, indeed, as an evidence that the Kingdom had "come upon them." Although in its form it might be outward, in its essence it was spiritual. While it was something to be entered in the future, men really entered it now as they accepted Jesus and His teaching—that is, they became members of it, having "their names written in Heaven," and would be recognised as such by the Son of Man when He came in His glory. He could thus say that the Kingdom of God was *within* men.[1]

[1] W. L. Walker.

¶ It is at hand; within one step of us—within one step of earnest purpose and resolute endeavour! It is here in the common things about us, here, in life's capacity for beauty, kindness, joy; here in home, friends, and even in the associations of the workaday world, which all are rich in the possibilities of kind and happy life! Yes, everywhere the Kingdom of God is "at hand" to every one of us. Only learn the meaning of this, and it will lead you into the blessed secret of that still deeper word—"the kingdom of God is within you."[1]

¶ People are always looking for their Kingdoms of God far away. There is always a visionary kingdom glowing in some dim distance of hope or fancy. Your schoolboy reads *Robinson Crusoe*, or Mayne Reid's stories of wonderful adventure, till it seems stupid and dull to be living at home, with regular meals and beds to sleep in, and he muses about some possible desert island or far-off wilderness where life might be passed, chiefly in going about with a gun. Men laugh at that—yet are they so much better? Their kingdoms are more prosaic and substantial, but men are just as liable to miss those that are close to them in looking for those which are far away and utterly problematical. This man has a longing to be at the head of his profession. He is just in the rank and file of it, and he wants to make a name. If he could do this, he could sing "nunc dimittis!" Thus another man, again, likes power—has a faculty for organisation:—to him it seems as if it would be the very "kingdom of God" to become the leader of his party, or to attain some high position in the country. This man has a craving to make some striking discovery in science; that, to write a successful book; the other, to paint the best picture of the year.[2]

(1) The Kingdom of God is at hand *individually*. Every religion has lived and grown in proportion to the number of those that it has helped to strain beyond the vision of the day, to rise above the standard of the hour. It has lived in the measure of the souls it has made. And souls are never made by conformity. They are made by faith. We are not helped to be our true selves by seeing clearly and at once all that we ought to believe and do. We are helped to the real possession of ourselves by a deeper instinct that can be strengthened into a resolute and courageous purpose because God is behind it—an instinct which will at all costs pluck the good from the very heart of evil. No religion has ever been given in a system.

[1] B. Herford. [2] *Ibid.*

It grew originally out of the heart, the strength, the soul of a living man. The greatest and truest religion grew out of the life of the greatest and truest Man. There God wrought and strove towards the making of an eternal Spirit, human and Divine, which might work and strive in other hearts for ever.

(2) The Kingdom of God is at hand *socially*. The result of all human living is social. The social will always grows out of the individual, and always in turn inspires it. The social will can healthily restrain the individual will only because it has first inspired it, and exactly in the measure in which it has inspired it. It restrains us aright when it stirs into life our responsibility towards it, when it makes us feel what we might be and do for it, when it makes us feel what we must not be and do to its hurt. Its restraint is unhealthy only when it would enslave us to its will as if that will were a thing apart from us. And then its will in turn becomes a dead thing, a thing which the living will of man must rebel against and overcome. The truth is that the individual man and human society are so related that the fullest individuality must make the richest and most fruitful society, that society inevitably perishes as individuality becomes meagre and shrunken. The man who is most himself is the man who gives most to society. The man who is a mere reflection of social convention is the man who is helping to make that convention more empty and barren every hour.[1]

iii. The Conditions of Entering the Kingdom.

"Repent ye, and believe in the gospel."

Our Lord here commands the two things which are required for salvation. "Except ye repent," He says elsewhere, "ye shall all perish." And St. Paul declares that without faith it is impossible to please God. Repentance is that which makes us look within ourselves; faith is that which makes us look out from ourselves. And not only must both faith and repentance be there, but they must also be there in proportion. A balance must be maintained between them. If repentance is strong while faith is weak the result is restlessness and dissatisfaction.

[1] A. L. Lilley.

There is the sense of sin, but there is no assurance of the mercy of God in Christ. Again, if faith is strong, or seems to be strong, while there has been no true repentance, there may be a false confidence that all is well, a blind trust, a blind security.

¶ Those who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away"; and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquities of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear, never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o'er again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle, and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Men who have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith," and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.[1]

1. **Repentance.**—"Repent ye." With these words Christ commenced His Galilean ministry. The first demand He made on men was the demand for repentance. When He sent out the Twelve on their missionary journey through the country towns and villages, it was to preach "that men should repent." When He gave His last instructions to His disciples before He was taken up, He explained to them that it was in accordance with the Scriptures that "repentance . . . . should be preached in his name unto all the nations."

¶ In the present day we do not sufficiently realise the necessity for repentance. To some extent we have even forgotten what repentance means. We read the great classical outpourings of the contrite soul—the Psalms, or the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, or the *Imitation* of A Kempis, or John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*—and they appear to us almost hysterical. The language of the broken spirit stirs in us no response. We cannot bring ourselves to pray, as Lancelot Andrewes used in agony to pray, "O Lord,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

help Thou mine impenitence; and more and more bruise, and wound, and pierce, and strike my heart!"[1]

What is Repentance?

1. The first element in penitence, St. Bernard has declared, is "regret for what is past." And this is the characteristic, perhaps, that first and most strikingly arrests attention. The whole literature of penitence is blotted with tears of sorrow. Its pages are red with the shame of the saints. Its great word is *Peccavi*. "O my God, my transgressions are very great, very great my sins." "I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me." "O my God! O God infinitely good! How canst Thou bear with a sinner like me?" This ache, this grief, this self-accusing sorrow seems inseparable from repentance. Even on those who know themselves forgiven, even on those who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," there falls the dark shadow of a wasted past, the sadness of knowing that they are not what they might have been.

Yes, Thou forgivest, but with all forgiving
Canst not renew mine innocence again:
Make Thou, O Christ, a dying of my living,
Purge from the sin but never from the pain!

¶ A well-known preacher once began his sermon by saying that he should that day choose seven texts, but pledged himself that all the seven should contain only three words. Those three words were, "I have sinned." And, unless we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, those words in their most solemn and crushing force ought often to be on the lips of every one of us. But the Bible shows us how often they may be used and yet not mean repentance. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned," in mere terror, and hardened his heart the moment the judgment was removed. Achan said, "I have sinned," like some criminal on the scaffold who confesses only when the consequences of his iniquity stare him horribly in the face. Balaam said, "I have sinned," but still went on in spite of the drawn sword of the angel, dazzled by the disastrous gleam of Balak's gold. Judas said, "I have sinned," but in him it was only despair and remorse as he flung down in the temple the accursed pittance for which he had sold his soul. Saul said, "I have sinned," but only to return to his

[1] F. Homes Dudden.

demoniac envy. But, ah! thank God His true penitents have uttered that cry in very different tones. Job said, "I have sinned," and humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and God exalted him. David said, "I have sinned," and in a voice broken by sobs sang the dirges of his *De profundis* and the wailing of his heart, and went forth to find the dark spirits of incest and fratricide walking in his house, but also to find that God restores to godly sorrow a clean heart and a free spirit. The prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned," and rose, poor boy, from the husks and swine and the far country to fling himself, weeping as if his heart would break, into his loving father's arms.[1]

¶ There was once at Westminster School a singularly innocent boy whose name was Philip Henry. Though he was a Nonconformist the stern royalist headmaster, Dr. Busby, loved him, and severe as he was he never chastised him but once, and then with the words, "And thou, too, my child." A holier boy, a holier man, never lived. A contemporary said of him, "Should angels come from heaven it is my sense they would not be heard with greater reverence. We praise all virtues in admiring him." Yet when Philip Henry was far advanced in years a young man said to him, "Mr. Henry, how long do you mean to go on repenting?" Sir," he meekly answered, "I hope to carry my repentance to the very gates of heaven."[2]

¶ Towards the end of his life, than which none has been seen more perfect outside the Gospels, St. Francis of Assisi wept so much over his sins that he injured his eyesight; but he would listen to no remonstrance. "I would rather choose to lose the sight of the body than to repress those tears by which the interior eyes are purified that they may see God." As George Herbert lay a-dying he said, "I am sorry that I have nothing to present to my merciful God except sin and misery, but the first is pardoned, and a few hours will put a period to the latter." Francis Quarles, the author of the *Emblems*, expressed great sorrow for his sins, and when it was told him that he did thereby much harm to himself, he answered, They were not his friends that would not give him leave to repent. And Bunyan learned "that none could enter into life but those who were in downright earnest, and unless they left the wicked world behind them, for here (in the narrow road) was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin." One of the ablest men of his time used to say of Erskine of Linlathen that he never thought of God but the thought of Mr. Erskine was not far away; yet Principal Shairp informs us that, in this holy man's last years, all who conversed intimately with him were struck with "his ever

[1] F. W. Farrar. [2] *Ibid.*

deepening sense of sin, and the personal way in which he took this home to himself." Penitence is one of the signs of true religion in every age.[1]

¶ The following curious dream was related to me by the woman who had the strange experience. She dreamed that she entered a large room where many people were on their knees in prayer. An old man with flowing beard was walking about; a man like one of the old prophets. She asked him where she was, to which he replied, "What, do you live in Bristol, and not know where you are?" "No," she answered. Then he told her that the kneeling people were inquiring how far they were from heaven. She said that she too would like to know. "Follow me," said the old man, and he led her towards an instrument like a telephone with a serpent-like pipe attached. He worked the apparatus and inquired, while the woman stood trembling for the answer. The reply came, "You are not on the road at all." Very sorrowful and shedding bitter tears she turned to leave the room. Just as she reached the door a voice, kind but firm, commanded her to stop. It was the old man's voice. When she turned round he said, "You're all right now." "How?" she asked; "I thought you told me I was not on the road at all." "Yes," he replied, "I did, but you are on the road now. You have just turned the corner and got on the right way. Those tears of yours are the tears of repentance, and now you are all right."[2]

2. But repentance is more than sorrow. Sorrow for sin is one element of repentance, but you can be sorry without repentance. There is a kind of sentimental sorrow, a sorrow at the thought of coming retribution and exposure, which is mean, selfish, devilish, and is not healthy and life-giving. There is a sorrow that weeps at funerals and sentimental plays. There are multitudes of people who think they are not far from the Kingdom because their tears come easily; they whisper all sorts of sweet messages to themselves because they can weep. They tell themselves that they are not hard, and therefore there must be hope for them, and all the while they are holding on to forbidden things and walking in forbidden paths.[3]

(1) It is *an act of will.*—Repentance is not primarily a species of feeling, but an act of will. I want again and again to

[1] John Watson. [2] William Forbes. [3] Gipsy Smith.

say that a man can repent with dry eyes. There may be much weeping and no repentance; there may be real penitence where there are no tears. The tears may come in the later day; at the moment of the turning the eyes may be undimmed. Some day I shall come to know how deeply I wounded my Saviour, and the thought may unseal the fountain of tears. Some day I shall know how terrible was my waste of the years, and I shall weep in the irreparable loss. But the first act of all penitence is to turn the back on sin and the face to the Lord. The beginning of all fulness is to be found in a sense of want. The perception of unlikeness to the Lord is the beginning of assimilation. And if I lack this sense of want let me turn to the Word of God. Let me take the commandments, and lay my soul against their measures. And then let me turn to the beatitudes, and estimate my life by their exalted demands. And let me turn to the life of the Master Himself, and accompany Him through His days; and at every turning let me put my soul beside His, and I shall be unlike all others if at the end of the journey I do not feel myself a child of spiritual poverty, craving for the grace and fulness of Christ. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

(2) It is *a movement of the whole being.*—The late Dr. Bright defined repentance as "a thorough-going movement of the whole being away from sin and towards the love and service of God." And I ask you to note these words—"a thorough-going movement of the whole being." Repentance knows no half-measures. It is not the correction of this little failing or that little failing. It is not patch-work. It is renovation of the whole state, and the whole nature, and the whole personality—renovation through and through, and out and out. That is what Bishop Wilson meant when he wrote, "There is no repentance where there is no change of heart." That is what Martin Luther meant when he spoke of repentance as "a real bettering and change of the entire life." That is what St. Paul meant in his doctrine of the "new creature." This is what the Saviour meant when He said to men, "Change your mind"—not merely change your actions or your habits, but your mind, your thoughts, your aims, your inner attitude, your very self. "Look to thy repentance," writes Richard Baxter

"that it be deep and absolute, and free from hypocritical exceptions and reserves."[1]

¶ I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ, have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of the text, and signifies "to change one's mind." Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle; and the change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance,—not so often, I admit, but still it is used,—which signifies "an after-care," a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing one's mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think, there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

> Repentance is to leave
> The sins we loved before,
> And show that we in earnest grieve,
> By doing so no more.

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit; and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance.[2]

2. Belief.—"Believe in the gospel." What is this? I suppose it to be assent to the truth as true, and then a personal trust in the influence and result of this truth. It is to turn from sin and to trust the promises of God in Christ for present and eternal salvation. He who thus trusts, honours God's truth, magnifies God's Son, and is saved. And yet people come to me almost every day, saying, "I am trying to trust." Suppose I should go to one of my friends who is the teller of a bank, with

[1] F. Homes Dudden. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

a cheque in my hand, and as I stood before the window I should hold the cheque, and say, "I want money for this." "Give me the cheque and I will bring you the money." "No; I cannot trust you that far." "Yes; but I will go right to the counter and bring you the money." "No; I will try to trust you" (and still I hold on to the cheque). "But my good man," my friend says, "I cannot get you the money without the cheque." "I cannot give you the cheque; that is the only evidence of value I have, and when I give you that it is all gone. I will try to trust you; bring me the money." I am turning the tables on the teller; I am asking him to trust me, instead of trusting him The act of trust is to give instantly all that we have that is imperilled into the hands of the One from whom the redemption and the provision are to come. And so when the sinner, believing the Word of Jesus Christ, just gives himself in prayer to Christ, and leaves himself, so far as his present safety and his eternal salvation are concerned, that man trusts and believes the gospel.

With penitence, then, there must come belief. And it must be belief, in the sense of trust. And it must be trust in a person who is trustworthy. I am to enthrone the Saviour in my soul. Deliberately, definitely, and decisively, I am to proclaim Him King. I am to bow to His will, and trust His power and grace. I am to commit my way to Him, and stake my all upon Him, to venture life and death, the present and the future, upon His fidelity and holy covenant. Then is the Kingdom founded, and gradually rioting will change into order, rebellion will pass into harmony, and some day I shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "All that is within me, bless his holy name."[1]

¶ In this, His first sermon, Jesus added a new word to the Baptist's message, and the substance of the things to be received had now gained from His life the title, which ever since it has held, "Believe the gospel." These three words were the love tokens with which He came to seek and save the lost. In the repetition of these three words He fulfils the embassage of peace upon which He came from the Father.[2]

¶ One of our visitors went to a poor home of suffering not long since, and in a dark chamber of the tenement lay stretched on a pallet of straw a poor woman, whom God had strangely afflicted by the loss of sight, and then by paralysis of one side—a poor, helpless

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] S. H. Tyng.

creature, so far as the offices of this world are concerned. He ministered to her in the necessities of her body, and then asked her how her soul was related to God; and, as Joshua with the children of Israel, he did it in the way of rebuke, at first: "Are you truly saved?" (for she had already professed that she was a Christian). The voice answered with meekness, "Why not?" "But what good thing have you done, to pretend to be saved?" And the only answer from the pallet of suffering was, "Why not?" "Yes; but perhaps you are presuming. How do you know you are saved?" The answer of faith came, "Jesus Christ came to seek and to save sinners, and I am a lost sinner; why am I not saved?" Ah! there was wealth there which no possessions of this earth can gain, for a sinner had taken God at His word. She propounded a question to which all the wise men of this age can give no answer. If a sinner, why not saved? This is the gospel, and this it is to believe the gospel.[1]

The phrase, "believe in the gospel" is unique. Nor do we elsewhere hear of believing the gospel. Faith is always regarded as due to the Person of whom the gospel speaks. Yet faith in the message was the first step. "A creed of some kind," says Swete, "lies at the basis of confidence in the Person of Christ."

¶ A poor woman once came to Dr. Barnardo with a broken heart, telling a sad story of the wandering life of an only daughter in the great metropolis, and implored his help. After considering the situation for a moment Dr. Barnardo said: "Yes, I can help you. Get your photograph taken, frame a good many copies, write under the picture, 'Come Home,' and send them to me." The pictures were soon in his hands, and were placed by him in the places frequented by such friendless outcasts. One night the unhappy girl saw the picture, and was greatly startled to see her mother's handwriting welcoming her home. That very night she returned repentant and forgiven to her mother's arms. It is this turning from a life of sin to a life of love that Jesus enables us to accomplish in response to His good news of proffered love and forgiveness.[2]

Love saith to me, "Repent";
Love saith to me, "Believe";
Love sayeth ofttimes, "Grieve
That thou hast little lent,
That thou hast little given,
To Him, thy Lord in heaven,
And when He cometh what wilt thou receive?"

[1] S. H. Tyng. [2] Hugh T. Kerr.

Love sayeth to me, "Pray
That thou mayst meet that day
Desired yet feared"; and ofttimes Love again
Repeats these words, and oh! my spirit then,
What sayest thou? "I say
To all Love sayeth, Yea,
Yea, evermore, and evermore Amen!"

The Gift of the Sabbath.

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THE GIFT OF THE SABBATH.

The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.—ii. 27.

THE innocent act of plucking corn and eating it as one went along, was regarded by the Pharisees as a breach of the commandment which forbade reaping on the Sabbath. This trivial formalism was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Pharisaic method of interpreting the law. Our Lord defends the action of His disciples by a three-fold argument. First, He quotes the example of David at Nob, as a scriptural precedent for the breaking of a ceremonial law when necessity demands it (vers. 25, 26). Then, taking a wider ground, He shows the meaning of the institution of the Sabbath (ver. 27). It was a provision for man's benefit, and therefore was of relative, not absolute, obligation. Our Saviour here enunciates a principle with regard to religious observances which is valid for all time. They are means to an end, and are never to be regarded in such a way that the end is sacrificed to the means. Thirdly, He declares that He Himself, as man's Head and Representative, has the right to control that which was made for the good of man (ver. 28). It was a tremendous claim, which, considering the Divine sanction of the ordinance in question, could without blasphemy have been made by no one but the God-Man Himself.[1]

Our immediate subject is God's gift to man of the Sabbath. It may be dealt with in two parts—

I. The History of the Gift.

II. The Use of the Gift.

[1] J. C. Du Buisson, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 24.

I.

The History of the Gift.

i. The Sabbath of Creation.

On the sixth day of creation man appears. He is a higher creation. He is to be on earth the representative of God in dominion—one with God; having knowledge, in his measure, like God's knowledge, life like God's life, authority like God's authority, and the possibility of righteousness like God's righteousness. And how shall man be helped to a true conception of a godlike life—a life, not of indolence, but of strength, repose, and peace? How shall man, with this wealth of material resources, be reminded of his spiritual endowment, mission, and dependence? How shall he be brought into a life of communion with God, his Maker, his Father—a life above the physical life; a life for the development of his spiritual nature, derived from God; a life nobler than a life of physical, commercial, social, political interest and activity; a life of preparation for all other and lower relations and responsibilities? And if man made innocent shall, when tested, fail of virtue and drop to lower levels, how shall he be brought up to righteousness and true holiness? Therefore the inspired poet of the creation added to his time-scale another day—a seventh day, a Lord's day, a day of Divine rest and of human opportunity. It was not a day of God's withdrawal from His universe, a day of the suspension of Divine interest and activity. It was an impressive symbol of human need and of the true rest of the soul of man—godlike only when in perfect harmony and communion with Him. Thus the primeval Sabbath was instituted as a reminder of man's high relationships, and as a help to his highest training for dominion on the earth and for the unutterable glories of his destiny beyond.[1]

ii. The Sabbath of the Decalogue.

The account of the observance of the Sabbath in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus precedes the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.

[1] J. H. Vincent.

When the manna fell, it marked the Sabbath day. None fell on that day. Twice as much fell on Friday as on any other day. For forty years that standing miracle marked the division of time into weeks, and made one day sacred as a day of rest and of worship. Then when the moral law was given, as you find it in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, observance of the Sabbath was incorporated in it by the finger of God. What else did God ever write with His finger? God's finger wrote upon the tables of stone, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He wrote it in what company? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." In what other company? "Honour thy father and thy mother." Do you want to vacate that commandment? And what other? "Thou shalt not kill." You want to abrogate that? And what other? "Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness."

¶ Take a single example of the way in which modern states have dealt with the day of rest along the lines of the Decalogue: The law of the State of Indiana and its penalty are found among the General Laws, chap. xxxv., sec. 1: "If any person, of the age of fourteen years and upward, shall be found on the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday, at common labour, or engaged in his usual vocation, works of charity and necessity only excepted, such person shall be fined in any sum not less than one nor more than ten dollars; but nothing herein contained shall be construed to affect such as conscientiously observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath."

iii. The Sabbath of Subsequent Times.

Come at once to the fifty-eighth and sixty-sixth chapters of Isaiah, the Messianic part of that book, the very last part of it, that glorious prophetic consummation which commences with the fifty-second chapter and extends to the end, presenting a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, unfolding the glorious hope of eternal life, and describing the crowning glories of Messianic days. Now in the very end of that book, where the prophet stands on tiptoe to see the remotest events, to see the last forecast of man in Messianic days, there he says,

"And from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord."

Not all Jews, but all flesh. And so the Old Testament leaves it. Now how does the New find it? First, in this second chapter of Mark, our Saviour affirms in the broad language of the text that the Sabbath was made for man. What a catholic utterance! How universal in its application! Then, in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, and from the thirty-fifth to the fortieth verse, we have an instructive lesson. A lawyer came to Him for light on the Ten Commandments: "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And He said, "This is the first and great commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, strength, soul, and mind.'" That covers four of the ten, the four that relate to God. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That covers the other table of the law.[1]

1. *The Pharisaic Misunderstanding.*—I suppose that the Christian conception of religion may be briefly defined as communion with a God who has revealed Himself as a loving Father by the manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To the Jew, on the other hand, religion appeared to be rather communion with a God who had revealed Himself by the law of Moses. What the Lord Jesus Christ is to the Christian, that the law of Moses was to the orthodox Jew of the time of Christ. As it is our aspiration to grow up into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, so it was the aspiration of the pious Jew to conform in all respects to the law, or, as St. Luke puts it, "to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." It was, perhaps, almost inevitable under such circumstances that men should study the law with a minute attention to detail which was fatal to the apprehension of the great principles of right which it embodied. It was not that the Scribes and Pharisees (I refer, not to the hypocrites among them, who are always to be found in every religion, but to the sincerely religious men, who were numerous)—it was not that they were wilfully disloyal to the great principles of the law, but that their method of looking to its details rendered them incapable of seeing its general effect.

[1] B. H. Carroll.

Since they regarded the law as all given by God, they did not, for the most part, perceive the relative importance of the various commandments, nor did they endeavour to trace out the principles underlying them. Their great object was to ensure that no commandment should be passed over. They carefully counted the exact number to be kept, and arrived at the conclusion that there were 613: 365 negative commandments, "Thou shalt not," or one for every day of the year; 248 positive commandments, "Thou shalt," or one for every bone of the body.[1]

Thus it may be said of the majority of religious Jews of the time of Christ that their object was not to mould their lives according to some few great principles, but to keep 613 distinct commandments. Some great men, it is true, were exceptions to this general rule. Thus, a generation or so before the time of Christ, Rabbi Hillel had summed up the whole law to an impatient proselyte in the memorable words quoted in a slightly different form by our blessed Lord Himself: "What thou wouldest not have thy neighbour do unto thee that do not thou to thy neighbour: this is the whole law; all the rest is commentary; go, study." But among men of less spirituality and genius than Hillel the idea of religion was not to work out a great principle, but to avoid transgression of a number of more or less distinct commandments.[2]

¶ The Rabbis themselves occasionally admitted the principle; see *Mechilta*, in Ex. xxxi. 13: "The Sabbath is delivered unto you, and ye are not delivered to the Sabbath." Our Lord's words rise higher, and reach further: at the root of the Sabbath law was the love of God for mankind, and not for Israel only.[3]

2. *Christ's Interpretation.*—The Sabbath in Christ's time was a veil upon the eyes of the people. It blinded the Jews so that they could not see further than the narrow walls of the synagogue, or the exclusive walls of the Temple court. It prevented them beholding any duty on that day further than the hearing of the law, or the offering of the set form of sacrifice. But Jesus Christ came to show them of the Father. A man who, believing that the Sabbath was specially God's

[1] Canon R. H. Kennett. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] H. B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 49.

day, and that because it was His day he was on no account to cure a sick man and tell him to realise he was cured by taking up his bed and walking,—on no account to lift an ox or an ass out of a pit, if either of them was the ox or ass of a foreigner,—what could such a man know of the duties of man to man, or of man to lower animals, as children of one Father who is in Heaven? No, the Sabbath, if men were to see in its ordaining the work of a Father of love and pity, mercy and gladness, must be spiritualised. They must make the Sabbath a real Sabbath if they would see that the Maker of it is a real Father.

¶ If this was part of the mind of Jesus Christ, if He came to get men to sit loose to the world, or as St. Paul put it, "to crucify the world unto themselves, and themselves unto the world," to care little about the kingdom of earth and the glory of it as compared with the Kingdom of Heaven—if Jesus came to show men of the Father of their spirits, and that all religious ordinances, all Sabbath observances, were but to lead men to behold God and live—then surely our Lord, speaking in metaphor as was His wont, might well have said, as one of the Oxyrhynchus Logia has it, "Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in no wise find the kingdom of God," and, "Except ye keep the Sabbath in the spirit—a real Sabbath—sabbatise the Sabbath—ye shall not see the Father." This is what the reputed saying seems to assert.[1]

iv. The Lord's Day.

1. *Its Origin.*—We have at the close of the Gospels the earliest record of the first day of the week as the time of our Lord's resurrection; and in memory of that event it became, during the Apostolic age, the recognised festival of the infant Christian community. We know not the exact date when it began to be set apart, but the notices of it are quite enough to show its character. It is mentioned in the Acts as the time when "the disciples came together to break bread," *i.e.* for the Lord's Supper. It is urged by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 2) that believers should "lay by in store" on the first day, for the offering on behalf of the poor; and the passing allusion makes it probable that it had become already a fixed time of worship. It is named again in the book of Revelation (i. 10);

[1] H. D. Rawnsley, *Sayings of Jesus*, 23.

and from the phrase, "the Lord's Day," we may fairly infer that it had gained that place in Christian worship which must have preceded the specific name. Henceforth it grew more and more into the reverent affection of the Church, until it became the great season of religious gathering; and at last, under Constantine, the laws of the empire forbade the opening of the courts and other secular business. Such was its origin and growth. It was the weekly Easter. It spoke to the early believer, as to us, of the risen Lord, and of that risen life in which was the bond of all holy fellowship.

2. *Its Relation to the Sabbath.*—What was the relation of the Lord's Day to the Sabbath? We turn for an answer to the New Testament. There can be no doubt whatever that the ancient law was kept among all Jewish Christians, for we read constantly of the Apostles as teaching and joining in the synagogue service of the seventh day. But it is as plain that the Gentile was in no sense bound to observe it. No one can read the striking passages from the Epistles of Paul (Col. ii. 16, 17; Rom. xiv. 5, 6) without perceiving that it is classed with all those Jewish usages, new moons, unclean meats, in regard to which no obligation was laid on the believer. Nor can any one fairly accept the express decision of the first Council at Jerusalem, without allowing that it is not included in the "necessary things" for Gentile duty. It must be noted, further, that the Lord's Day was never substituted for the seventh. Each rested on its own ground. The Gentile kept the feast of the Resurrection. The Jewish Christian kept both days, just as he circumcised his children and baptized them likewise. It remained for many years, and by slow degrees faded away; it was long retained in some churches of the West as a fast, in memory of our Lord's burial before the day of His rising; yet at length it dropped from use, and by the natural law of life the first day remained alone, the one weekly season of worship. This is the sum of the evidence. It leaves it exactly as in the case of baptism, where the Christian rite took the place of circumcision by historic change, yet rests on the commandment of Christ and the spirit of a larger Gospel.[1]

[1] E. A. Washburn.

¶ In the "Apology for Christians," which Justin Martyr wrote to Antoninus Pius, between the years 138 and 150, he says: "We all of us assemble together on Sunday, because it is the first day in which God changed darkness and matter, and made the world. On the same day also Jesus Christ, our Saviour, rose from the dead, for He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is that of the Sun, He appeared to His apostles and disciples, and taught them what we now submit to your consideration." It is evident from this, and from other historic documents, that Christ's resurrection made the first day far more illustrious to Christians than the seventh; and when the Temple was destroyed, and Judaism, like a shadow, vanished, the Jewish Sabbath vanished with it. In this change, which was, we believe, wrought by the Spirit of Him who was with His people always, we have a proof of this startling declaration: "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day"; and the justification for the change lies there. The shell was broken, but the kernel remained; the transient and typical passed away, but only in order that the permanent and true might remain for ever. And it was because St. Paul saw and understood this, that, in his Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 16, 17), he wrote about the Sabbath words so bold that many are still afraid to take them in their legitimate and obvious signification: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of *the Sabbath days*, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [*or* substance] is of Christ."[1]

¶ The Christian motive for observing the Lord's Day is the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. That truth is to the Christian Creed what the creation of the world out of nothing is to the Jewish. The Lord's Day marks the completed Redemption, as the Sabbath had marked the completed Creation. The Resurrection is also the fundamental truth on which Christianity rests; and thus it is as much insisted on by the Christian Apostles as is God's creation of all things by the Jewish prophets. Not that the creation of all things by God is less precious to the Christian than to the Jew: but it is more taken for granted. In Christian eyes, the creation of the world of nature is eclipsed by the creation of the world of grace; and of this last creation, the Resurrection is the warrant. The Resurrection is commemorated, as St. Irenæus points out, on the first day of the week, when God brought light out of darkness and chaos. It is the risen and enthroned Lamb who says, "Behold, I make all things new": and therefore if "any man be in Christ, he is the new creation."[2]

[1] A. Rowland.

[2] H. P. Liddon, *Easter in St. Paul's*, 282.

II.

The Use of the Gift.

The importance of Christ's statement, "The Sabbath was made for man," is permanent and universal; it establishes not the exception, but the rule; it deals not with temporary and fluctuating prejudices, but with fixed, eternal principles. It puts us in a new position with reference to the question, Why do I observe the Lord's Day? The old questions, What has a Christian to do with Jewish enactments? What to him is the ceremonial law? Why is our liberty to be narrowed by the opinions of bigots incapable of distinguishing between the spirit and the letter? All these had their use, as they certainly have had their misuse, in the past. But put the question in this form. The Sabbath was made for man; why then should man be deprived of it? If to the Jewish Church in its best ages, to its most enlightened seers, the Sabbath was a delight, holy and honourable, full of happy thoughts and feelings, a season of refreshment, of bodily repose and spiritual rejoicing, why should the Christian Church forfeit the privilege?[1]

i. It is a Gift for every Man.

1. If the Sabbath was made for man, it must have been because man needed it; not, certainly, as a mere temporary provision for special purposes, but as a permanent blessing. Who shall take from us one of God's first gifts to His creatures—a gift bestowed with a special regard to their physical and spiritual wants, and consecrated by His own example? Look at the question in this light, test the principle by its application to the facts of daily experience, to the wants of your inner and outer life, and you will dismiss, as matters of exceedingly little importance to the man of common sense, the greater part of the discussions which have filled large volumes of wearisome controversy, and which will remain unsettled so long as men differ in feelings and habits,

[1] Canon F. C. Cook.

and in the power of dealing with the accumulated masses of conflicting theories and ill-digested facts. If we know that now in the Lord's Day, its new and most significant designation, we have all that made the Sabbath a boon to man, a season in which the soul, free from earthly trammels, may realise its nearness and affinity to God—what to us can it matter that at a period of struggle and of reaction, good and conscientious, though narrow-minded, men sought to counteract licentious tendencies by recurrence to enactments which appertained altogether to a dispensation long since passed away? We are surely in a position to maintain the truth, to hold fast the good for which such men contended, without reference to their prejudices, without involving ourselves in their mistakes. Why, in short, should we trouble ourselves with any question but this? Do I use for my own real benefit, for the benefit of all over whom I have any control, the Sabbath which was made for me, which my Saviour has claimed as His own; of which He is now, as ever, the Lord; which His Spirit, working in and through His Church, has associated for ever with the crowning fact of His religion, His resurrection from the dead? These are to my mind the questions which we are bound to consider as Christians, as men who have to work out our own salvation, whose duty it is, so far as may be possible, to communicate our blessings and convictions to our fellow-men.[1]

¶ Robertson of Brighton, whose insight into spiritual philosophy was as direct and penetrating as his practical surrender to its teaching was complete, says of Sabbath observance: "I am more and more sure by practical experience that the reason for the observance of the Sabbath lies deep in the everlasting necessities of human nature, and that as long as man is man the blessedness of keeping it, not as a day of rest only, but as a day of spiritual rest, will never be annulled."

This is the day of light: let there be light to-day;
O Dayspring, rise upon our night, and chase its gloom away!
This is the day of rest: our failing strength renew,
On weary brain and troubled breast shed Thou Thy freshening dew.

[1] Canon F. C. Cook.

This is the day of peace: Thy peace our spirits fill,
Bid Thou the blasts of discord cease, the waves of strife be still.
This is the first of days: send forth Thy quickening breath,
And wake dead souls to love and praise, O Vanquisher of death![1]

2. All God's children have a right to share in its blessings, poor as well as rich, servants equally with masters and mistresses, employed and employers alike; for station in life and outward circumstances cannot alter man's needs. Instincts are universal; they are our common inheritance as human beings.

The first day of the week is, to many Christians, not only the one day of rest but the one day of worship. The majority of men and women in our land, owing to the exacting claims of everyday life on their time and thought in these times of high pressure, have little or no opportunity of meeting together in united worship on any other day. More than that, the question of Sunday observance is fitly linked with that of worship, because the social aspect of Christianity is forcibly emphasised by both. No Christian who attempts to grasp all that is involved in a right use of Sunday can persuade himself that his individual observance or non-observance of the day is a matter to be decided solely on personal and selfish grounds, but must acknowledge that his decision as to whether or how he will keep the day affects not only himself and his own conscience, but also the well-being of others.

Not all that is lawful to do is right for the Christian to do. Even if right in itself, it becomes wrong if it be done at the unnecessary expense of others' time and thought, or at the cost of the health of the body or mind or spirit of others. Sunday cannot be a day well and wisely spent by a man if in what he does, or neglects to do, he thinks only of himself, and is indifferent to what extent others are obliged to work in order that he may rest, or is careless whether recreation, in itself lawful and innocent, means toil to those who ought to have rest.[2]

¶ Christianity has given us the Sabbath, the jubilee of the whole world, whose light dawns welcome alike into the closet of the philosopher, into the garret of toil, and into prison-cells, and everywhere suggests even to the vile the dignity of spiritual being.[3]

¶ It is the *student's* day, whereon he may turn from the

[1] John Ellerton. [2] C. J. Ridgeway. [3] Emerson.

ordinary to the sublimer world of thought and find new inspiration for his daily endeavour. It is the *doubter's* day, on which he may investigate the most momentous questions of God and duty and destiny. It is the *children's* day, when the home circle may be perfect, and sweet memories be planted which shall fill the later years with their fragrance. The children need the gentle influence of the Sabbath. And if we who are no longer children were to give ourselves up to the consecration and the conservation of the day in the interest of the young life of the land, we should not only ensure a better and a larger life to the next generation, but we should ourselves enter more fully and with greater plenitude of power into that Kingdom of which its Founder said to His disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Sabbath is the *poor man's* day, when he can have leisure to reward the love of wife and children, go with them to the house of God, and enjoy to the full what Longfellow calls "the dear, delicious, silent Sunday, to the weary workman both of brain and hand the beloved day of rest." It is the *rich man's* day, when, if he will, he may throw off the burdens of anxiety and prove to his family that there are some things he prizes as much as stocks and estates and silver and gold—a day when he may transfer some of his treasures to the heavens and fix his heart on things above, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. It is the *mourner's* day, on which eyes that weep in sore bereavement may look upward and hear a voice out of the heavens say, "In my Father's house are many mansions." It is the true *all saints'* day, when, rising above the littleness, the rivalries, the limitations of this life, we may look through Sabbath skies to the innumerable company in the city on Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem.[1]

I have a birthright straight from heaven,
A birthright in which all men share;
By my own Maker's hand 'twas given,
'Tis sanctified by praise and prayer;
I shall not give that right away;
No man shall have my Sabbath day!

All through the week let anvils ring,
And hammers clang and bellows blow;
Let bright sparks fly and sledges swing,
And bar and furnace gleam and glow:
But speak up, blacksmith; boldly say,
"*No man shall have my Sabbath day!*"

[1] J. H. Vincent.

Bend, weary weaver, o'er your loom
All week from dawning's glimmering sky,
And till the twilight gathers gloom
Let treddles tramp and shuttles ply:
But speak up, brother; boldly say,
"*You shall not have my Sabbath day!*"

Let axes flash in forest glades
While oak and ash and elm tree fall;
Let the slow team toil through the shades,
Obedient to their driver's call:
But speak up, woodman; boldly say,
"*You shall not have my Sabbath day!*"

From mill and factory and mine
Still let this selfsame cry arise;
Claim one day as a holy shrine
In which to commune with the skies:
Speak up, and loudly, boldly say,
"*You shall not have my Sabbath day!*"

It is our birthright straight from heaven
'Tis sanctified by praise and prayer;
By our great Maker's hand 'twas given,
And trench upon it who shall dare:
We shall not give that right away,
No man shall have our Sabbath day![1]

ii. It is a Gift for the Whole Man.

The Sabbath is made for man, that is, for man as God designed and created him. The whole man must have the opportunity of sharing in the benefits of the day, or it fails in its object. The body of man finds in it the rest it needs; not, indeed, by doing nothing, for idleness is never true rest, but in change of occupation. The mind of man rests not by lying fallow and thinking of nothing, but by diverting its energies into new channels. The heart of man renews its strength not by ceasing to love, but in change of surroundings, in the quiet of home life and home affections and interests. The spirit of man puts forth new powers, as raised heavenward it contemplates the unseen, and looks up to God instead of being engrossed in

[1] *The British Workman*, 1867.

the earthy. "On Sunday," says Lord Macaulay, "man, the machine of machines, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labours on Monday with clear intellect, with livelier spirits, and with renewed vigour." The quaint rhymes of Sir Matthew Hale emphasise this in familiar words—

A Sunday well spent
Brings a week of content,
And health for the toils of to-morrow.
But a Sunday profaned,
Whate'er may be gained,
Is a certain precursor of sorrow.[1]

1. It is necessary for our *Physical Health.* The laws and conditions of man's bodily life and health are such as to make intervals of repose absolutely essential to the proper and continued performance of the labours that most men have to endure. In asserting this we do but affirm man to be a part of Nature, and human life to be no exception to earthly life in general, for rest is one of Nature's primal and universal laws. Without repose neither plant-life nor animal-life can reach the best possible forms. The soil must sometimes lie fallow, or its energies and treasures will ultimately become exhausted. No animal can long survive without rest and sleep. Men who systematically set at naught this physiological demand hasten on prematurely the infirmities and decay of old age.

The fundamental idea of the Sabbath is that of physical rest. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Then, as the first comment upon this—the only comment, indeed—abstinence from labour is enjoined, and enlarged upon to a degree somewhat unusual in a condensed code like the Ten Commandments. Take care of the body, it seems to say, as the foundation on which the spiritual and the intellectual are to rise. If we are ever tempted to be surprised at the purely physical aspect of this commandment, let us not forget the stress St. Paul lays on bodily culture. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." There the

[1] C. J. Ridgeway.

exhortation stops. The words "and in your spirit which are his," were added by some late hand. And the very fact that we are now and then startled by the emphasis that is laid by the Bible upon bodily culture is in itself a proof that we are on a wrong line of thought—the line of the mediæval theology which viewed the body, not as God's agent, but as God's enemy; not as a servant to be trained and developed to do His will, and to be the minister of mind and soul, but as an encumbrance to be ignored in mental and spiritual culture, and as a tempter and seducer, to be kept down by fasting and maceration. Too readily we fall into the habit of thinking that while we are under obligation to glorify God with our spirit, we may do with our body pretty much as we please. And as a correction of that error it will do us good to remember that God has wrought the obligation to our bodies into the very heart of the moral law as well as into the gospel.

¶ Lord Beaconsfield once said, "Of all Divine institutions, the most Divine is that which secures a day of rest for man. It is the corner-stone of civilisation."

¶ There are about twenty-five millions of persons now in England and Wales. Let us drop the word millions and say, for simplicity's sake, that there are twenty-five, and that these twenty-five form (as, indeed, they do form in God's sight) a single family. Well, if so, these are their proportions and occupations: eight of the twenty-five are the young children, six are the women of the household, the rest are grown men; of these men two till the soil, six are in shops or manufactories, one is a tradesman, one is in either the jail or the workhouse, and one belongs to the independent, the wealthy, or the professional classes. Now, even this one million of the ruling and the professional classes need Sunday as a day of holy rest; but how much more do the eight million children, and the six million women, and the nine or ten million labourers, and artisans, and clerks, and shopmen need it![1]

¶ Dr. Farre, as a physiologist, has demonstrated the fact that the rest of the night without the additional rest of the Sabbath is insufficient for the maintenance of bodily vigour, and for the prolongation of life. History confirms this. The National Convention in Paris abolished public worship in 1793, and appointed the tenth day instead of the seventh for the partial cessation of labour; but every one knows that it was at least

[1] F. W. Farrar, *Bells and Pomegranates*, 129.

for the physical advantage of the nation when Napoleon restored the seventh day, in the year 1806.

¶ Not only animals need regular off-days, when they are to do no work, but all mechanical and scientific instruments need it, in order to reach maximum usefulness. It has been demonstrated that a steam-engine, an axe, a hand-saw, will do more work in the long run with regular days of absolute rest. An instance is given in a late review by an experienced engineer, of two engines of like pattern, capacity, and material. One was run every day so many hours. The other only six days in seven, but yet as many hours in the six days as the first in seven. The one which had its Sabbaths outlasted and outworked the other so far as to excite marked attention.[1]

2. It is necessary for our *Mental Health.* Man is not a mere animal. He has a life of the mind which likewise demands occasional relief from the wearing toils and anxieties of secular life. Our nervous force, which lies at the basis of thought and feeling, can bear only a certain amount of strain, and if this be transgressed, an impaired and morbid condition of mind is sure to be the result. Every one knows that incessant and anxious brooding over any one subject or idea will induce melancholy and even insanity.

'Tis painful thinking that corrodes our clay.

¶ Very weighty are the words of John Burns on this question: "Sunday rest is physically good, mentally invigorating, and morally healthful. It has been commercially beneficial to the people of this land. It has done more than anything else to buttress and maintain the excellent institution we call 'home.' The day of rest is, from every point of view, a national treasure." So, too, writes a great French statesman, President Arnot: "The Sunday rest is an essentially democratic institution, more needed now than ever owing to the high pressure at which we live."[2]

¶ We have a picture given to us of how one who was no grim Puritan or narrow-minded Pharisee spent Sunday in his home, and there is nothing in it which might not be reproduced, so far as the surroundings of our lives allow, in English homes to-day. "The Sundays were bright to the children, who began the day with decking the graves in the churchyard, an example which the poor people learned to follow, so that it looked like a garden. And when his day's work was done—and Sunday was the busiest day of the week to him—there was always the Sunday walk, a

[1] B. H. Carroll. [2] C. J. Ridgeway.

stroll on the moors, some fresh object of beauty pointed out. Or indoors the Sunday picture-books were brought out. Each child had its own book and chose its subject for father to draw—some short story, or bird or beast or flower mentioned in the Bible. Happy Sundays! never associated with gloom or restriction, but with God's works or God's Word." Such was Sunday in the home of Charles Kingsley.

¶ "Do the birds know when it is Sunday?" a little girl asked her mother; "they always seem to be more cheerful, and sing much more, on Sundays." I remember having heard a child ask on a similar occasion, why the birds did not rest on Sundays. In these two questions there seems to lie the whole difference between the keeping of Sunday and the desecration of it: the former child knew what a true keeping of the Sunday is; the latter did not.[1]

3. It is necessary for our *Moral Health.* The quality of our moral character is vitally influenced by the habit of regular cessation from the more sordid cares and efforts of life. Contentment of spirit, cheerfulness of disposition, clearness of judgment, sensitiveness of conscience, strength and directness of will, are all to some extent dependent upon physical conditions, while these human excellences can certainly not be cultivated to their highest pitch without regular opportunities for the contemplation of moral truth and exalted ideals. Nations have become morally debased and have been torn by anarchic convulsions when deprived of opportunities of this sort. At the end of the last century a sad illustration of this was presented to the world. The Sabbath was abolished in France. Every trace of religion was as far as possible wiped out. Reason was worshipped as a goddess. The names of the days were altered, and decades took the place of weeks. The results were most disastrous. It was not long before the whole nation was thrown into disorder. All morality languished. Every heart trembled before the greed and tyranny that were practised by those in power. And at length the people, almost in despair, and clinging to the spars of goodness and virtue that alone remained to them in their wreck, welcomed those against whom they had fought, and by the help of their foes restored the weekly Sabbath. How true are the words of Blackstone, the greatest of our lawyers—"A corruption of morals usually follows a profanation of the Sabbath."[2]

[1] James Gordon. [2] W. Spiers.

¶ Although I would not pin my faith to any political party or religious sect; and though I would not advocate or practise all the Puritan restrictions, yet I agree with Fred. W. Robertson, when he says: "If we must choose between Puritan over-precision, on the one hand, and, on the other, the laxity which, in many parts of the Continent, has marked that day from other days only by more riotous worldliness and a more entire abandonment of the whole community to amusement, no Christian would hesitate—no English Christian, at least, to whom that day is hallowed by all that is endearing in early associations, and who feels how much it is the very bulwark of his country's moral purity."[1]

¶ Although certain superstitious fears that I had detract somewhat from my thought of the Sabbath of my childhood, yet the thought of my father and mother remains; the sanctity of that day remains; its stillness remains. When I waked up in the morning, and found the Sabbath morning's sun pouring full into my room; it was the carpet on the floor and the paper on the wall; for there was none other but the golden sunlight. When I remember the voice of the cock (and there were no wheels rolling to disturb the clarion tones), when I remember how deep the heaven was all the day, when I remember what a strange and awe-inspiring sadness there was in my little soul, when I remember the going down of the sun and the creeping on of the twilight, there is not in my memory anything that impresses me as so rich in all the tropics as a Christian Sabbath on the old Litchfield hills. My children have not that—woe to me—and their children, I am afraid, will not have it; but you take out of the portfolio of my memory the choicest engravings if you take away from me the old Puritan Sunday of Connecticut. Let the framework stand; but unite with it a better usage. Bring into it less sanctity of the superstitious kind, less rigour, less restriction, but more love, more singing, more exultation, more life. Make the Sabbath honourable and joyful. Then the people will accept it, and it will stand as immovable as the mountains.[2]

4. It is necessary for our *Spiritual Health.* Above all things it was ordained because it was indispensable to our spiritual growth. Our health, mental and bodily, depends upon the harmonious and complete development of all our faculties. The neglect of any power which belongs to the integrity of our nature leaves us stunted, deformed, liable to physical or mental disease, to subtle and overpowering temptations, such as daily

[1] A. Rowland. [2] Henry Ward Beecher.

consign multitudes to wretchedness; and this must especially be the result if that faculty is suffered to decay for want of its proper nourishment, which, as many writers have had occasion to observe, constitutes the most special characteristic of man as distinguished from the brute. The religious instinct, the capacity and the desire of communion with the Divine, the reception and assimilation of spiritual truth—that, we must never for a moment forget, is the true distinctive mark of man; man with the upward-looking eye, man with his intellect in proportion to its elevation conversant with abstract truth, man with a heart and conscience responding and testifying to the truth of the living God. It is for man specially, as such, man as a spiritual being, that the Sabbath was especially made, and so far as regards his noblest faculty, made not for its repose, for its suspension or temporary cessation from action, but for its active exercise, its perfect development, its continuous growth. The labourer, as such, whatever may be the field of his occupation, whether the toil and drudgery of manual work, or the far more exhausting struggle of intellectual efforts, ceases to be a mere labourer on the Sabbath day. The Lord of that day, who determines its obligations and dispenses its blessings, relieves him of the burden which he bears so long, and which but for Christ he would bear hopelessly until he lays down his worn-out frame in the quiet grave. But the inner man, the spiritual man, as such, far from ceasing to act, acquires the full consciousness of himself, the full use of all his powers, when he consecrates that day to the purposes for which it was bestowed.

Few of us may realise this fact thoroughly from our own experience; all of us must be conscious how far we have been at the best from such a consecration of our Lord's own day; but just to the extent that we have done it, or seriously attempted to do it, we can satisfy ourselves that it is so. It is simply unreasonable to suppose that any of our faculties will attain to their full and healthy development unless special care and special seasons be appropriated to their culture; nor can one who trusts the Word of God, or tests that Word by the facts of inner experience or the accredited records of the past, doubt that, over and above the daily care which must

be bestowed upon the noblest and loftiest principle of our human nature, one-seventh portion of the week is asserted, and is found, to be an indispensable condition of its healthy growth.

¶ George Washington, at the beginning of the War of the Revolution, issued an order from which I quote:—"That the troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as to take some rest after the great fatigue they have gone through, the general in future excuses them from fatigue duty on Sundays, except at the shipyards or on special occasions, until further orders. We can have but little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms if we insult it by our impiety and folly."[1]

¶ "I wonder how it is," said Farmer Denton, "that our Daisy seems so much happier on Sundays than on other days!" Then Daisy spoke up from her seat on her father's knee. "You see, papa, Sunday is God's day, and I want to make it as nice a one for Him as I can." "Bless the child," said her father, "if it is right for you to do this, it is right for everybody else to do the same."[2]

¶ Every day a Christian should practise communion with God. He should be like the Yorkshireman who said he enjoyed religion every day. He had a happy Monday, a blessed Tuesday, a joyful Wednesday, a delightful Thursday, a good Friday every week, a glorious Saturday, and a heavenly Sunday.

Bright shadows of true Rest! some shoots of blisse;
Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossest in this;
A day to seek
Eternity in time; the steps by which
We climb above all ages; Lamps that light
Man through his heap of dark days; and the rich,
And full redemption of the whole week's flight!

The Pulleys unto headlong man; time's bower;
The narrow way;
Transplanted Paradise; God's walking houre;
The cool o' th' day!
The creature's *Jubile*; God's parle with dust;
Heaven here; man on those hills of myrrh and flowres;
Angels descending; the Returns of Trust;
A Gleam of Glory after six-days-showres!

[1] J. H. Vincent. [2] H. S. Dyer, *The Ideal Christian Home*, 118.

The Churche's love-feasts; Time's Prerogative,
And Interest
Deducted from the whole; The combs, and hive,
And home of rest!
The milky way chalkt out with Suns, a clue
That guides through erring hours; and in full story
A taste of Heav'n on earth; the pledge and cue
Of a full feast; and the out-courts of glory![1]

iii. It is a Gift that is without Repentance.

"There remaiueth a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to prevent Jewish Christians from apostasy to Old Testament Judaism. The un-Christian Jews would entice them thus: "We have Moses; we have Aaron, the high priest; we have Joshua, who led the people into Canaan; we have a Sabbath, pointing to Canaan as the promised land; we have a ministry of angels." Now, to furnish the Christian with an argument to meet all these weighty claims this letter was written. The Christian can say: Jesus is greater than angels, greater than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, greater than Joshua, redemption is greater than creation, and as God rested from the works of creation, sanctifying the seventh day for a Sabbath, so as Jesus rested from the works of redemption on the first day of the week, they too have a Sabbath. So it is established that the people of God are to have a Sabbath-keeping. If the reference be exclusively to the heavenly rest, the argument is not weakened, since the type must abide until the antitype fulfils it.[2]

¶ This blessed day is an earnest, an infallible prophecy of the eternal rest which awaits us in heaven. Here, we have conflicts and trials. This life is full of toil and strife and disappointment and bereavement. There is no absolutely perfect rest in this life. But that rest which remains to God's people in the immortal life which is to come, will be perfect. The toil is here, but the rest is yonder. The conflict is here, but the victory is yonder. The cross is here, but the crown is yonder. The sorrow is here, but the happiness is yonder. God gives us one day in every week in which to think especially about these things. Every Lord's Day this perfect rest, this final victory, this complete happiness, this

[1] Henry Vaughan. [2] B. H. Carroll.

glorious reward should be brought prominently before the Christian's mind and heart.[1]

Yes, there remaineth yet a rest!
Arise, sad heart, who now dost pine,
By heavy care and pain opprest,
On whom no sun of joy can shine;
Look to the Lamb! in yon bright fields
Thou'lt know the joy His presence yields;
Cast off thy load and thither haste;
Soon shalt thou fight and bleed no more,
Soon, soon thy weary course be o'er,
And deep the rest thou then shalt taste.

The rest appointed thee of God,
The rest that nought shall break or move,
That ere this earth by man was trod
Was set apart for thee by Love.
Our Saviour gave His life to win
This rest for thee; oh, enter in!
Hear how His voice sounds far and wide:
Ye weary souls, no more delay,
Nor loiter faithless by the way,
Here in my peace and rest abide![2]

[1] W. G. Neville [2] *Lyra Germanica.*

An Eternal Sin.

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AN ETERNAL SIN.

Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.—iii. 28–30.

I SHALL never forget, says Dr. Samuel Cox,[1] the chill that struck into my childish heart so often as I heard of this mysterious sin which carried men, and for ought I knew might have carried even me, beyond all reach of pardon; or the wonder and perplexity with which I used to ask myself why, if this sin was possible,—if, as the words of our Lord seem to imply, it was probable even and by no means infrequent,—it was not clearly defined, so that we might at least know, and know beyond all doubt, whether it had been committed or had not. And, since then, I have again and again met with men and women of tender conscience and devout spirit who, by long brooding over these terrible words, had convinced themselves that they had fallen, inadvertently for the most part, into this fatal sin, and whose reason had been disbalanced and unhinged by a fearful anticipation of the doom they held themselves to have provoked. The religious monomaniac is to be found in well-nigh every madhouse in the kingdom; and in the large majority of cases, as there is only too much ground to believe, he has been driven mad by the fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin: although the man who honestly fears that he has committed this sin is just the one man who has the witness in himself that he cannot possibly have committed it.

¶ I was as silent as my friends; after a little time we retired to our separate places of rest. About midnight I was awakened by a noise; I started up and listened; it appeared to me that I heard

[1] *Expositor*, 2nd Ser., iii. 321.

voices and groans. In a moment I had issued from my tent—all was silent—but the next moment I again heard groans and voices; they proceeded from the tilted cart where Peter and his wife lay; I drew near, again there was a pause, and then I heard the voice of Peter, in an accent of extreme anguish, exclaim, "Pechod Ysprydd Glan—O pechod Ysprydd Glan!" and then he uttered a deep groan. Anon, I heard the voice of Winifred, and never shall I forget the sweetness and gentleness of the tones of her voice in the stillness of that night. . . . I felt I had no right to pry into their afflictions, and retired. Now "pechod Ysprydd Glan," interpreted, is the sin against the Holy Ghost.[1]

I.

The Occasion of this Warning.

It was a time of spiritual decisions, when the thoughts of many hearts were being revealed. For nearly two years the Gospel had been proclaimed in the land, and for nearly a year Christ had been teaching in Galilee. All eyes were upon the new Prophet. His words were with authority, His deeds were of amazing power, though as yet no dazzling "sign from heaven" had appeared. Public opinion was divided. The multitudes were heard saying, "Can it be that this is the Son of David? We fear not! Why is no great deed done for the nation's deliverance? This Messiah, if He be the Messiah, forgives sins and heals the sick, but that will not drive out Herod from Tiberias nor the Romans from Jerusalem." Our Lord's own brothers, hearing the reports brought to them, made up their mind that He was deranged. On the other hand there were many, though but few compared with the great majority, who could already say with Nathanael and Peter: "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." But in high ecclesiastical circles another theory was heard which had its part in shaping public sentiment: "He is a false prophet, possessed by Satan."

The immediate occasion of the discourse was the healing of a peculiarly afflicted demoniac. It was in the house at Capernaum, soon after Christ had returned from an extended

[1] G. Borrow *Lavengro*, chap. lxxiii.

evangelistic tour, accompanied by the Twelve and many other disciples. A sad picture—this man brought before Him in the midst of the pressing crowd—dumb, blind, and possessed by an evil spirit; a soul imprisoned in silence, shut away into hopeless darkness, reached by no ray of earth's light and beauty, and, what was still more terrible, subject to that mysterious "oppression of the devil" by which an evil presence from the unseen world was housed within him, and rendered his inner life a hideous and discordant anomaly. With what unutterable joy must this man have gone forth from the Saviour's presence, with unsealed lips, with eyes looking out upon the world, and in his right mind.

Every such miracle must of necessity have raised afresh the question of the hour, Who is this Son of Man? Jesus must be accounted for. The scribes are ready with their theory—plausible, clear, and conveniently capable of being put into a nutshell. Jesus is Himself a demoniac, but differs from all other demoniacs in this respect, that it is no ordinary demon, but the prince of all the evil spirits, that has taken possession of Him; hence His control over all inferior demons: "by the prince of the devils casteth he out the devils."

¶ I was greatly perplexed about the second lesson I should read in the conducting of a Sabbath morning service. It seemed an utter impossibility to fix my mind upon any chapter. In this uncertain state I remained until the singing of the last verse of the hymn preceding the lesson. I prayed for direction. A voice said, "Read what is before you." It was the twelfth chapter of St. Luke. At the tenth verse (similar to Mark iii. 28, 29) I paused, read again the verse, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." Then I asked: "What is this sin against the Holy Ghost?" I explained it as attributing the works and words of Christ, His influence, spirit, and power to Satanic agency. Just then I turned to my right, and noticing a beautiful bouquet which some one had placed on my table, I took the bouquet in my hand, saying, "There are bad men in this district, but I do not think there is one so depraved as to say that the growth, the beauty, and the fragrance of these flowers are the work of the devil. In the lower sense that would be sinning against the Holy Ghost." Then I continued my reading.

The result was that the following Tuesday the gardener's daughter called to thank me, saying her father had found the Saviour the preceding Sabbath. She said he had long thought he had sinned against the Holy Ghost, but that illustration about the flowers set him at liberty. Going down the garden, standing before a rose bush in full bloom, he said, "Bad as I have been, I have never said these flowers were the creation of the devil. No, my Father made them all."[1]

II.

The Language.

1. "Verily I say unto you." This is the earliest occurrence of the phrase in St. Mark, and therefore in the Gospels.

2. "All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men." As if He shrank from the saying that is to follow, He prefaces it with a fresh and loving proclamation of the wideness of God's mercy. There is no shortcoming in the bestowal of the Divine mercy, there is no reluctance to pardon sin. Equal, abundantly equal, to the human need is the Divine provision. "For as the heaven is high above the earth"—and we have no line to measure that distance—"so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." "All their sins"—not one of them shall be put down as unforgivable; they may all be taken away, though they be red like crimson. The very thief upon the Cross, the vilest at whom the world hisses, may appeal in his last desperate hour for mercy, and receive the assurance of it from the lips of Christ. It is a very tender proof of the love and longing of Christ for men's souls that He speaks thus ere He lets fall the most solemn warning that ever came from His lips. "All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men." What more do we want to hear? Is not this enough? "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities"; "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But there is more.

3. "And their blasphemies." What is meant by blasphemy? It is hardly necessary to explain that the word blasphemy means primarily injurious speech, and, as applied to God, speech derogatory to His Divine majesty. When our Lord said to the

[1] C. G. Holt.

palsied man, "Thy sins are forgiven," the bystanders complained that the words were blasphemous, for no one but God had the right to say them. To blaspheme is by contemptuous speech intentionally to come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things; and this, according to Jesus, was the offence of the Scribes and Pharisees. What He says is occasioned by their charge that He had an evil spirit, that is, that the power acting in Him was not good but bad. Their offence lay in their failure to value the moral element in the work of Jesus. They saw what was being done; in their hearts they felt the power of Christ; they knew His words were true, and that His works were good works. Rather than acknowledge this, and own Christ for what He was, they chose to say that the spirit in Him was not God's Spirit but the spirit of the devil, involving a complete upsetting of all moral values, and revealing in themselves a stupendous and well-nigh irrecoverable moral blindness.

4. "But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost." From this the sin is often and properly described as "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," though the popular title, taken from what follows, is "The Unpardonable Sin."

5. "Hath never forgiveness." Literally "hath not forgiveness unto the age" (*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*). The phrase is used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew *l'olam*, which means "in perpetuity" (Ex. xxi. 6, xl. 15), or with a negative, "never more" (2 Sam. xii. 10; Prov. vi. 33). But in the New Testament it gains a wider meaning in view of the eternal relations which the Gospel reveals. It signifies "this present world" in Mark iv. 19, the future life being distinguished from it as "the world to come" (*αἰὼν ὁ ἐρχόμενος*) in Mark x. 30. In the passage in Matthew about the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, corresponding to the present passage in Mark, the two words are "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come" (Matt. xii. 32).

6. "But is guilty of an eternal sin." The passage is in no case easy to understand, but it is made much harder in the Authorized translation than it is in the original. The Greek word (*κρίσις*), which in the reading adopted by the Authorized Version, ends the 29th verse of the chapter, is not "damnation"

or even "condemnation," but simply "judgment." It is now, however, universally allowed that the word in the original manuscripts is here not "judgment" at all, but "sin"—"is guilty of (or "liable to") an eternal sin." Some early commentators, not understanding the expression, inserted "judgment," as more intelligible, in the margin, from which it crept into the text.

The word here translated "eternal" (*αἰώνιος*) is the adjective formed from the word "age" or "world" (*αἰών*) of the previous phrase. In a great many places where this adjective may be rendered "everlasting," it is impossible not to feel that this does not give the whole or the exact meaning. This is very noticeable in such profound sayings of our Lord as "Whoso eateth my flesh hath *eternal* life," "This is life *eternal*, that they might know thee"; "He that hath my word, hath *eternal* life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life"; "Thou hast the words of *eternal* life." All such expressions rather convey a thought somewhat like that of St. Paul's "Hidden with Christ in God," life not of the world, but above and beyond temporal and worldly things; not so much the endlessness of eternity, as its apartness from time. Something in the same way, "an eternal sin" can hardly mean an everlasting sin, but rather a sin which has in it a living power of evil, the bounds of which cannot be prescribed.

¶ We regard the argument against endless punishment drawn from *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* as a purely verbal one, which does not touch the heart of the question at issue. We append several utterances of its advocates. The Christian Union: "Eternal punishment is punishment in eternity, not throughout eternity; as temporal punishment is punishment in time, not throughout time." Westcott: "Eternal life is not an endless duration of being in time, but being of which time is not a measure. We have indeed no powers to grasp the idea except through forms and images of sense. These must be used, but we must not transfer them to realities of another order."

Farrar holds that *ἀίδιος*, "everlasting," which occurs but twice in the New Testament (Rom. i. 20 and Jude 6), is not a synonym of *αἰώνιος*, "eternal," but the direct antithesis of it; the former being the unrealisable conception of endless time, and the latter referring to a state from which our imperfect human conception of time is absolutely excluded. Whiton, *Gloria Patri*, 145, claims

that the perpetual immanence of God in conscience makes recovery possible after death; yet he speaks of the possibility that in the incorrigible sinner conscience may become extinct. To all these views we may reply with Schaff, *Church History*, ii. 66—"After the general judgment we have nothing revealed but the boundless prospect of æonian life and æonian death.[1]

III.

The Meaning.

1. How is it that sin against the Son of Man may be forgiven, while blasphemy against the Holy Ghost may not? The Son of Man, says Dalman,[2] here refers to the Messiah in His estate of humiliation. "The primary form of the utterance is seen in Mark, who merely contrasts blasphemy in general with blasphemy against the Spirit which inspired Jesus (iii. 28 f.). Luke xii. 10 speaks of blasphemy of the 'Son of man' and of the 'Spirit'; Matt. xii. 32 is similar, but the statement to this effect is annexed to another, which corresponds to the form found in Mark. It is impossible that Matthew and Luke should here intend to make a distinction between two Persons of the Godhead, as if it were a venial sin to blaspheme the 'Son.' The distinction is between Jesus as man and the Divine Spirit working through Him. Invective against the man Jesus may be forgiven; blasphemy against the Divine power inherent in Him is unpardonable, because it is blasphemy against God."

2. How then may one be guilty of this unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? The conditions of obtaining pardon are three, namely—Confession, *i.e.* acknowledgment of sin; Repentance, or hearty sorrow for sin; and Faith, or trust in the sinner's Saviour. Now, how can these conditions be fulfilled? How are we brought into a state in which we can realise the willingness to acknowledge our transgressions, the hearty sorrow which breaks us down on account of our sin, and the trust which helps us to believe that Jesus can forgive? We can be brought into this condition only by one Power, through the agency of one Person, the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy

[1] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, iii. 1046.
[2] *The Words of Jesus*, 254.

Spirit of God must teach our consciences, the Holy Spirit of God must gain control over our wills; and only through the teaching of the Holy Spirit in our souls are we made able or willing to acknowledge our sin, repent of our sin, and believe in our Saviour. This Holy Scripture teaches us. But it is possible for us to reject and blaspheme the whole testimony of the Spirit of God; it is possible for us, not only to reject what the Holy Spirit teaches us, but even to say, in the wilfulness of our depraved nature, that what the Holy Spirit says is truth is untruth, and what the Holy Spirit says is light is darkness. Progression along this awful pathway is marked in Bible language by three words. First, there is "Grieving the Spirit of God." The second stage is "Resisting the Holy Spirit." Then, thirdly, there comes the awful state in which the Spirit of God is "quenched." Grieve, resist, quench! These three sad words mark the progress along this path of evil, this path of sin, which ultimately brings men into a state where their sin is unpardonable. When that is done, and not until that is done, the unpardonable sin has been committed. Here, then, we see the nature of this sin. It is a stubborn and conscious unwillingness to fulfil the conditions of pardon. If a man brings himself into a state in which he at first will not, but which ultimately becomes a state in which he cannot, fulfil the conditions of pardon, how can he be pardoned? It is not that God is unwilling to pardon him; it is not that God's forgiving grace is incapable of bringing him forgiveness; it is that he has brought his own soul into such a state that it is impossible for him to fulfil those conditions upon the fulfilment of which alone God can grant forgiveness.[1]

3. *The Freedom of the Will.*—Those who hold that the will of man is absolutely free, should remember that unlimited freedom is unlimited freedom to sin, as well as unlimited freedom to turn to God. If restoration is possible, endless persistence in evil is possible also; and this last the Scripture predicts. Whittier:

> What if thine eye refuse to see,
> Thine ear of Heaven's free welcome fail,
> And thou a willing captive be,
> Thyself thy own dark jail?

[1] W. A. Challacombe.

Swedenborg says that the man who obstinately refuses the inheritance of the sons of God is allowed the pleasures of the beast, and enjoys in his own low way the hell to which he has confined himself. Every occupant of hell prefers it to heaven. Dante, *Hell*, iv.:

> All here together come from every clime,
> And to o'erpass the river are not loth,
> For so heaven's justice goads them on, that fear
> Is turned into desire. Hence never passed good spirit.

The lost are *Heautontimoroumenoi*, or self-tormentors, to adopt the title of Terence's play.

¶ The very conception of human freedom involves the possibility of its permanent misuse, or of what our Lord Himself calls "eternal sin."[1]

¶ Origen's Restorationism grew naturally out of his view of human liberty—the liberty of indifference—an endless alternation of falls and recoveries, of hells and heavens; so that practically he taught nothing but a hell.[2]

¶ It is lame logic to maintain the inviolable freedom of the will, and at the same time insist that God can, through His ample power, through protracted punishment, bring the soul into a disposition which it does not wish to feel. There is no compulsory holiness possible. In our Civil War there was some talk of "compelling men to volunteer," but the idea was soon seen to involve a self-contradiction.[3]

¶ A gentleman once went to a doctor in London to consult him about his health. The doctor told him that, unless he made up his mind to give up a certain sin, he would be blind in three months. The gentleman turned for a moment to the window, and looked out. Clasping his hands together, he exclaimed, "Then farewell, sweet light; farewell, sweet light!" And turning to the doctor, he said, "I can't give up my sin." He *was* blind in three months.[4]

4. *The Irrevocable.*—How easy it is after a time to lose the sense of sin in this world; to substitute for it outward propriety of conduct, to transgress which is immorality; to substitute the opinion of the world, good or bad, to go against which is bad taste; to look at the world around us as affecting duty, benevolence, and the like; and to make our relationships

[1] Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 255.
[2] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ii. 669.
[3] J. C. Adams, *The Leisure of God.*
[4] Henry Drummond.

towards this the test of character, whereby we may be known as good or bad.

> Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
> Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
> Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
> The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
> Thus blindly, with thy blessedness at strife?
> Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
> And custom lie upon thee with a weight
> Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life![1]

Taught in the school of propriety, reared on utility, and pointed to success, by degrees the sense of sin may become faint and dim to him, until out of the ruins of respectability and the desolation of his inner life, he is brought face to face with an eternal sin. The figures of existence have deceived him; he has made the addition of life, omitting the top line, and not allowing for deductions—he is face to face with an utter loss, an eternal sin.[2]

¶ The laws of God's universe are closing in upon the impenitent sinner, as the iron walls of the mediæval prison closed in, night by night, upon the victim,—each morning there was one window less, and the dungeon came to be a coffin. In Jean Ingelow's poem "Divided," two friends, parted by a little rivulet across which they could clasp hands, walk on in the direction in which the stream is flowing, till the rivulet becomes a brook, and the brook a river, and the river an arm of the sea, across which no voice can be heard and there is no passing. By constant neglect to use our opportunity, we lose the power to cross from sin to righteousness, until between the soul and God "there is a great gulf fixed" (Luke xvi. 26).

¶ Whittier wrote within a twelvemonth of his death: "I do believe that we take with us into the next world the same freedom of will as we have here, and that *there*, as *here*, he that turns to the Lord will find mercy; that God never ceases to follow His creatures with love, and is always ready to hear the prayer of the penitent. But I also believe that *now* is the accepted time, and that he who dallies with sin may find the chains of evil habit too strong to break in this world or the other." And the following is the Quaker poet's verse:

[1] Wordsworth. [2] W. C. E. Newbolt.

Though God be good and free be Heaven,
No force divine can love compel;
And, though the song of sins forgiven
May sound through lowest hell,
The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects thy sanctity of will.
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still.

¶ As soon as any organ falls into disuse, it degenerates, and finally is lost altogether. . . . In parasites the organs of sense degenerate. Marconi's wireless telegraphy requires an attuned "receiver." The "transmitter" sends out countless rays into space: only one capable of corresponding vibrations can understand them. The sinner may so destroy his receptivity, that the whole universe may be uttering God's truth, yet he be unable to hear a word of it. The *Outlook*: "If a man should put out his eyes, he could not see—nothing could make him see. So if a man should by obstinate wickedness destroy his power to believe in God's forgiveness, he would be in a hopeless state. Though God would still be gracious, the man could not see it, and so could not take God's forgiveness to himself."

¶ Lowell's warning to the nation at the beginning of the Mexican War was only an echo of a profounder fact in the individual life of the soul:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.[1]

¶ Throughout the physical world you may cure fevers, dropsies, fractures, derangements of vital organs; you may violate all the multiplied economies that go to constitute the individual physical man, and rebound will bring forgiveness; but there is a point beyond which if you go it will not, either in youth, in middle life, or in old age. Many a young man who spends himself until he has drained the fountain of vitality dry in youth is an old man at thirty; he creeps and crawls at forty; and at fifty, if he is alive, he is a wreck. Nature says: "I forgive

[1] Lowell, *The Present Crisis.*

all manner of iniquity and transgression and sin to a man who does not commit the unpardonable sin,"—for there is an unpardonable sin, physically speaking, that is possible to every man. If a thousand pound weight fall upon a man so that it grinds the bones of his leg to powder, like flour, I should like to know the surgeon that could restore it to him. He may give him a substitute in the form of wood or cork, but he cannot give him his leg again. There is an unpardonable sin that may be committed in connection with the lungs, with the heart, or with the head. They are strung with nerves as thick as beads on a string; and up to a certain point of excess, or abuse of the nervous system, if you rebound there will be remission, and you will be put back, or nearly back, where you were before you transgressed nature's laws; but beyond that point—it differs in different men, and in different parts of the same man—if you go on transgressing, and persist in transgressing, you will never get over the effect of it as long as you live. So men may go so far in sinning that there can be no salvation for them, their case being hopeless just in proportion to the degree in which they become moral imbeciles.[1]

IV.

The Use.

1. There are three ways in which this sin may be regarded at the present day.

(1) *As a Great Mistake.*—It is part of that almost automatic punishment of sin (automatic, *i.e.* unless checked) in which God, who can release, unbind, and forgive, stands on one side, and allows the sin to work itself out. Surely we are face to face with the possibility of a great mistake, where a man gets so entirely out of sympathy with God that, where there is God, he can see only an evil spirit; where there is goodness, he can see only malignity; where there is mercy, he can see only cruel tyranny. The great mistake! It begins, perhaps, in the will. Life is presented with all its fascinating material; there is the deadly bias of disposition, while there is the make-weight of grace; and the will gives in, appetite after appetite is pressed into the service, present enjoyment, present gratification, are everything; the world is one great terrestrial paradise of enjoy-

[1] Henry Ward Beecher.

ment, indiscriminated, unchecked. And the dishonoured will now seeks to justify its degradation by an appeal to the intellect. Sin is decried as an ecclesiastical bogey. It is easy to get rid of grace by saying that it has been dangerously patronised by an enslaving priestcraft. Enjoyment must be scientifically sought, and that means sometimes at our neighbour's expense by acts of unkindness, malignity, or incredible meanness. And then from the intellect it goes to the heart. "My people love to have it so." This is looked upon as a sufficient account of life. Nothing more is desired, nothing more is looked for. "I will pull down my barns, and build greater." This is the extent of the heart's ambition. See how the great mistake has spread! Self has deflected all the relations of life until the man has become denaturalised. What can the Holy Spirit do for him? The claims of religion are a tiresome impertinence; the duties to society are a wearisome toil. The thought of death is a terror, and the other world a blank. He has made a great mistake—his relations to the world, to God, to self, are inverted unless God interferes, *i.e.* unless the man allows God to interfere; he is guilty of an eternal sin, in the sense of having made an irreparable mistake, and missed the object for which he was created, the purpose for which he was endowed.

(2) *As a Great Catastrophe.*—Whereas the lower animals are almost mechanically kept in bounds by instinct, man owes this to the sovereignty of his will, that in every action he does, he must command and be obeyed as a free man, or submit and be controlled like a conscious slave. And from the early days of his history there has been a tendency to dissolution and catastrophe in the injury known as sin. Sin means a defeat; it means that the man has been beaten somewhere, that the enemy has swept over the barrier, and laid siege to the soul; it means a revolution, that the lower powers have risen up and shaken off control; and this in the end means injury; if persisted in, an eternal prostration of the soul. It is an awful moment for a man when he feels he cannot stop, when the will utters a feeble voice, and the passions only mock; when habit winds its coils tighter and tighter round him like a python, and he feels his life contracting in its cruel folds. What a terrible consciousness to wake up to the thought that the position which

God has given us, the talents, the intellect, the skill have been abused by a real perversion of life, and that we have been doing only harm when we were meant to be centres of good! See how an eternal sin may mean an eternal catastrophe, where the forces of life have become mutinous and disobedient; where self-control has gone for ever, and anarchy or misrule riot across life—where there is the perversion of blessings, which reaches its climax in the fact that man is the great exception in the order of Nature; that while every other living thing is striving for its own good, man alone is found choosing what he knows to be for his hurt. There is no ruin to compare to it, no depravity so utterly depraved as that which comes from a disordered and shattered human nature. There it floats down the tide of life, a derelict menacing the commerce of the world, an active source of evil as it drifts along, burning itself slowly away down to the water's edge, once a gallant ship, now a wreck; once steered in the path of active life, now drifting in the ways of death—an eternal sin.

(3) *As a Great Loss.*—"I do not wonder at what people suffer; but I wonder often at what they lose." You see a blind man gazing with vacant stare at the glorious beauty of a sunrise or sunset, when the changing light displays ever a fresh vesture for the majesty of God. It is all blank to him, and you say, "Poor man, ah, what he has lost!" You see one impassive and unmoved at the sound of splendid music, where the notes ebb and flow in waves of melody about his ears; one who can hear no voice of birds, no voice of man, in the mystery of deafness; and you say again, "Poor man, what he has lost!" But there is a loss of which these are but faint shadows. The loss of God out of life, which begins, it may be, with a deprivation, and is a disquieting pang; which, if it is not arrested, becomes death; which, if persisted in, becomes eternal, becomes utter and complete separation from God; which becomes what we know as hell—the condition of an eternal sin. A mortal sin as it passes over the soul is a fearful phenomenon. And yet it has been pointed out that the little sins play a more terrible part than we know in the soul's tragedy. A great sin often brings its own visible punishment, its own results; we see its loathsomeness; but the little sins are so little we hardly notice them. "They are like the drizzling rain which wets us through

before we think of taking shelter." The trifling acts of pride or sloth, the unchecked love of self, the evil thought, the word of shame, the neglect of prayer—we never thought that these could kill down the soul and separate from God, and suddenly we wake up to find that God has, as it were, dropped out of our lives. To measure the cost of sin, little or great, we have but to look at two scenes. Let us reverently gaze at the form of our blessed Lord in His agony in the Garden, bent beneath the insupportable weight of the sins of the world, and see in the sweat of blood and the voice of shrinking dread the anguish of the weight of sin which could extort a groan which the pangs of the Cross failed to evoke. Or listen again to that word of mystery which echoed out of the darkness of the Cross into the darkness of our understanding—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[1]

¶ Without forming any theory about sin, Jesus treats it as *a blindness of the soul.* If only the eye were in a healthy state—that is, if the organ of spiritual sense were normal, the light of God would stream into the soul as it did with Him. But here lies the mischief. The centre of life—the heart—is wrong. In vain the light from without solicits entrance; it plays on blind eyeballs. The light within is darkness. The goodness which passes muster among the Pharisees, or the religious philosophy of the Scribes, is no better than the blundering of those who know not the law. When the blind leads the blind, leader and led fall into the ditch.[2]

2. There are two applications of Christ's words that we may make for our own instruction.

(1) First of all, we may put away from ourselves the thought that the blasphemy here spoken of has anything in common with those unhappy wanderings of thought and affection which morbid introspection broods upon until it pleads guilty to the unpardonable sin. It is no sin of the flesh, of impulse or frailty or passion, no spiritual lapse of an unguarded hour, of erring or misled opinion, that shuts us out from the Divine forgiveness. There is nothing here to alarm any mourner for sin whose contrition proves that it has actually been possible to renew him unto repentance. Whoever is troubled with the

[1] Canon Newbolt. [2] R. F. Horton.

thought that he may have committed the unpardonable sin proves, by his very grief and self-accusation, that he has not committed it; for he who is really guilty will be secure against all such self-reproaches. The perilous state is theirs, who have no qualms and no doubts, but are blinded by their pride and self-complacency.

(2) Secondly, the narrative illustrates this other great truth—that with what measure men judge of Christ and His work it shall be measured to them again. The Scribes thought they had given an answer sufficient in its contemptuousness when they referred Christ and His miracles to the devil. They little knew all they were doing; they were revealing their own character and writing their own condemnation. Their judgment was in reality the most complete betrayal of themselves. What they thought of Christ was the key to open up their own miserable souls.[1]

> There is an Eastern story, not unknown,
> Doubtless, to thee, of one whose magic skill
> Called demons up his water-jars to fill;
> Deftly and silently they did his will,
> But, when the task was done, kept pouring still.
> In vain with spell and charm the wizard wrought,
> Faster and faster were the buckets brought,
> Higher and higher rose the flood around,
> Till the fiends clapped their hands above their master drowned![2]

[1] D. Fairweather. [2] Whittier.

Desire and Duty.

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DESIRE AND DUTY.

And as he was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with devils besought him that he might be with him. And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.—v. 18-20.

THE story of the healing of this man, usually called the Gadarene demoniac, is told in the previous verses of the chapter.

1. There is some uncertainty regarding the locality. The place is given in the manuscripts in three different forms—country "of the Gadarenes," "of the Gergesenes," and "of the Gerasenes." Gadara was six miles from the Sea of Galilee, and therefore impossible. Gerasa was thirty miles away, and out of the question. Still, the probability is that we should accept the reading *Gerasenes*, and refer it, not to the city of Gerasa, but to an obscure place of the same name, close to the lake, which had been lost sight of. Gergesa may be a corrupted form of this name.

2. Before passing to the subject, notice that three requests, singularly contrasted with each other, are made to Christ in the course of this miracle of healing the Gadarene demoniac—(1) the evil spirits ask to be permitted to go into the swine; (2) the men of the country, caring more for their swine than their Saviour, beg Him to take Himself away, and relieve them of His unwelcome presence; (3) the demoniac beseeches Him to be allowed to stay beside Him. Two of the requests are granted; one is refused. The one that was refused is the one that we might have expected to be granted.

For, ah! who can express
How full of bonds and simpleness
Is God;
How narrow is He,
And how the wide, waste field of possibility
Is only trod
Straight to His homestead in the human heart;
Whose thoughts but live and move
Round Man; who woos his will
To wedlock with His own, and does distil
To that drop's span
The attar of all rose-fields of all love![1]

I.

The Variety of Christ's Instructions

Three distinct instructions given by Christ to His followers are found in the Gospels.

1. Sometimes He charged them to say nothing whatever about what He had done. In the end of this very chapter we find the injunction laid emphatically upon those who knew that He had raised Jairus' daughter from the dead: "He charged them much that no man should know this."

There are four special cases of this injunction to silence, and they occur after the healing of four of the greatest of human ills—dumbness (Mark vii. 36), blindness (Matt. ix. 30), leprosy (Mark i. 44), and death (Mark v. 43); to which must be added the command laid on the unclean spirits (Mark iii. 12). And in two cases (Mark i. 44; Matt. ix. 30) a particularly strong word is used to express a stern, urgent, even impassioned request or command.

2. He charged this man to go home and tell his friends. The explanation of the difference between the one command and the other is to be found in the circumstances. In the previous cases silence was necessary for Christ's sake. In this case speech was necessary for the sake of the man himself. Moreover, the danger to the work of Christ in Decapolis was not as the danger would have been in Galilee.

[1] Coventry Patmore.

3. He commanded His disciples after the Resurrection to go into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. xxviii. 19). In the early part of His ministry silence is enjoined that the work may not be hampered. But the work is saving souls, and the consideration for one soul makes an exception in the case of the demoniac. At the end, when the work is accomplished, the demand for silence is revoked. The order now is that the good news should be made known in all the world, and it is laid as a charge on every one of His disciples.

II.

The Conflict between Duty and Desire.

The great lesson of the text is here. And it is that (1) desire is not always duty, but that (2) duty must come before desire, and that then (3) desire and duty will agree together. The demoniac, no longer a demoniac, but clothed and in his right mind, desired to be with Jesus; but Jesus bade him go home and tell the story of his healing. He went, and found his great pleasure in telling the news, at which all men marvelled.

i. Desire.

The request of the man commands sympathy. Had I been such as he, each man seems to say, it is the very boon I should have craved. The brief period of time between the healing and the departure seemed far too short to utter the gratitude welling up in his heart. It may be that he was not free from the fear that if the Great Healer departed, the old evil, which man had tried in vain to master, would anew take possession of him. He must live among the Gadarenes, an object of their dull curiosity, and of their unslumbering suspicion. He must live among those who would always remember him as the man at whose healing their herds of swine were destroyed, and who would bear him a grudge they could not forget. And most of all, his life would be lonely, his unique experience would shut him out from the intimate sympathy of any other. Present with Christ, listening

to the voice that spoke his freedom and still thrills his soul, he has no further need. And yet he shrank—who would not?—from so speedy a separation from Him whose coming had been the cause of his salvation, whose presence was the source of his stability, whose departing, he perhaps feared, would prove the occasion of a new and direr bondage to evil.[1]

ii. Duty.

"Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not." There were arrears of duty owing to the neglected home-life, from which he had been a stranger for a long time (Luke viii. 27). Besides, there were virtues which would find their most congenial soil in the very life from which he so naturally shrank. And, finally, there was some risk that in daily dependence upon Christ the man would miss the discipline which he needed.

¶ There is a story of a poor but devout man who once came to a bishop of Paris, and said with a sorrowing heart, "Father, I am a sinner; I feel that it is so, but it is against my will. Every hour I ask for light, and humbly pray for faith, but still I am overwhelmed with doubts and temptations. Surely if I were not despised of God, He would not leave me to struggle thus." The bishop answered him with much kindness: "The king of France has two castles in different situations and sends a commander to each of them. The castle of Mantleberry stands in a place remote from danger, far inland; but the castle of La Rochelle is on the coast, where it is liable to continual sieges. Now, which of the two commanders, think you, stands highest in the estimation of the king?" "Doubtless," said the poor man, "the king values him the most who has the hardest task and braves the greatest danger." "Thou art right," replied the bishop. "And now apply this matter to thy case and mine; for my heart is like the castle of Mantleberry, and thine like that of La Rochelle."

There is no better way of keeping out devils than working for Jesus Christ. Many a man finds that the true cure—say, for instance, of doubts that buzz about him and disturb him, is to go away and talk to some one about his Saviour. Work for Jesus amongst people that do not know Him is a wonderful sieve for sifting out the fundamental articles of the Christian

[1] J. T. L. Maggs.

faith. And when we go to other people, and tell them of that Lord, and see how the message is sometimes received, and what it sometimes does, we come away with confirmed faith.

But, in any case, it is better to work for Him than to sit alone thinking about Him. The two things have to go together; and I know very well that there is a great danger, in the present day, of exaggeration, and insisting too exclusively upon the duty of Christian work whilst neglecting to insist upon the duty of Christian meditation. But, on the other hand, it blows the cobwebs out of a man's brain; it puts vigour into him, it releases him from himself, and gives him something better to think about, when he listens to the Master's voice, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee."[1]

¶ "Master! it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles. Stay here; let us enjoy ourselves up in the clouds, with Moses and Elias; and never mind about what goes on below." But there was a demoniac boy down there that needed to be healed; and the father was at his wits' end, and the disciples were at theirs because they could not heal him. And so Jesus Christ turned His back upon the Mount of Transfiguration, and the company of the blessed two, and the Voice that said, "This is my beloved Son," and hurried down where human woes called Him, and found that He was as near God, and so did Peter and James and John, as when up there amid the glory.[2]

Not on some lone and lofty hill apart
Did Christ the Saviour render up His heart
For man upon the cross of love and woe;
But by the common road where to and fro
The passers went upon their daily ways
And, pausing, pierced Him with indifferent gaze.
And still the crosses by life's highway rise
Beneath the blinding glare of noonday skies;
Still with the wrestling spirit's anguished cry
Blends the light mockery of the passer-by,
While scorners, gathered at the martyr's feet,
With railing tongues the olden taunts repeat.
We may not go apart to give our life
For men in some supernal, mystic strife,
Beside the common paths of earth doth love
Look from its cross to the still heavens above.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] *Ibid.*

The refusal had a threefold message to the man—a message to his will, a message to his thought, and a message to his heart.

1. *A Message to his Will.*—For by the refusal of his request the man is to be educated to a necessary independence. It was not gratitude alone that prompted his wish to be near Christ. It was a haunting sense of insecurity. Those who have had experience of some of the aspects of nervous disorder know the terrible character of the fears which haunt the minds of those who are its victims. They lose self-reliance; they dread isolation. This man has been cured of his disease, but he fears the return of it if left alone. But Christ in His wisdom knows that it is best that he should be thrown on his own resources. He must resume the prerogative of his manhood, as a self-directing, self-controlling being. It is the method of all education, human and Divine. It is the method of the mother with her child; it is God's method with man when He places him on the earth; it is the way Christ dealt with His Church.

2. *A Message to his Thought.*—The man's thoughts were concentrated on his visible Healer. He must be taught to pass in thought beyond that which is seen and realise those spiritual powers of which outward things convey but a passing expression. He must walk by faith and not by sight. He must pass from the material to the spiritual. This step also has its analogy in all human education. We begin our education with the concrete. We learn to count by the use of coloured beads upon a wire; from these we pass to figures; from figures we go forward to algebraical signs and symbols. By the same method man has been taught to know God. St. Paul appealed to the Athenians to give over the worship of idols made with hands, and to worship Him in whom we live and move and have our being. Even the visible Christ must go away. It is expedient for us. "Touch me not," He says to the eager Magdalene still; to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

3. *A Message to his Heart.*—Our Lord points out to the man that life is not for self but for others. Instead of the joy of being near Himself He gives him a duty—"Go home to thy friends." Were the friends unworthy? Had they been more

kin than kind? It may be so. But this man had met with a wonderful experience. He had gained knowledge of a love that did not look for return. He can now think with sympathy of those to whom this wonderful revelation is unknown. So every new power, and every fresh experience, carries with it responsibility. Love is contagious; nay, it is more, it is infectious. Freely we have received, freely we fain would give. Moreover, it is by self-forgetful effort among others that the man is to win his own independence. And again it is the method of all true education. The child is not merely told to try to walk. Some object to be reached is put before him. The pupil is not simply bidden to think. Some definite problem is submitted to his thoughts. Man's powers of independence and self-reliance are drawn out by the necessity of work. And that the disciples might become assured of power, Christ set them to discharge their duty. Their task was to teach all nations.

¶ It has been written, "An endless significance lies in work;" a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these, like hell-dogs, lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labour in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame![1]

iii. Duty and Desire One.

"Go home to thy friends, and tell them"; and you will find that to do that is the best way to realise the desire which seemed to be put aside, the desire for the presence of Christ. For be sure that wherever He may not be, He always is where a man, in obedience to Him, is doing His commandments. So when He said, "Go home to thy friends," He was answering

[1] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, chap. xi.

the request that He seemed to reject, and when the Gadarene obeyed, he would find, to his astonishment and his grateful wonder, that the Lord had *not* gone away in the boat, but was with him still. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel Lo! I am with you alway."

I said, "Let us walk in the field."
He said, "Nay, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black,
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back,
"There is more," He said, "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose to-night,
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the field,
Then set my face to the town.
He said, "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine
And into my heart came He,
And I walked in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see.[1]

[1] George Macdonald.

III.

The Home Missionary.

1. The man's first duty was to his own house. His tale was to be told first in his own circle. "Go home to thy friends and tell them." It is a great mistake to take recent converts, especially if they have been very profligate beforehand, and to hawk them about the country as trophies of God's converting power. Let them stop at home, and bethink themselves, and get sober and confirmed, and let their changed lives prove the reality of Christ's healing power. They can speak to some purpose after that.

¶ Many years ago, a friend of mine was taking an evangelistic tour through the Highlands of Scotland in company with a young friend, recently converted. When they came to the young convert's native village, my friend said, "Samuel, you must speak to-night." "I can't," was the reply, "I never said half a dozen words in public in my life." "But you must; God tells me you are to speak to-night." Accordingly, at the right moment, Samuel rose in the meeting and, in trembling awkward fashion, said, "Every one here knows me. Parents used to point their children to me, and tell them to be like me. They called me a model boy: but if I had died three months ago, I should have gone straight to hell." My friend told me afterwards he could never forget how the power of God came down upon that meeting. But this was only Samuel's first word for Christ. He has spoken many since. For a long period he has been a member of Parliament, and when a word needs to be said on behalf of the cause of God and truth in the House of Commons, Samuel is the man to say it. And, somehow, he makes people listen. But to-day he would trace the beginning of all that is useful in his public career to those few trembling words, falteringly spoken, in his native village.[1]

The fear was on the cattle, for the gale was on the sea,
An' the pens broke up on the lower deck an' let the creatures free—
An' the lights went out on the lower deck, an' no one near but me.

It is the story of a strong, regardless, ungodly man helpless among the cattle aboard ship in a fearful storm. He sees that

[1] W. C. Sage.

he will certainly be horned or trod upon. And more pens broke at every roll—so he made his Contract with God.

An' by the terms of the Contract, as I have read the same,
If He got me to port alive I would exalt His Name
An' praise His Holy Majesty till further orders came.

So Mulholland was saved from the cattle and the sea, although sorely damaged by a stanchion, so that he lay seven weeks in hospital. Then when he was convalescing he spoke to God of the Contract, and this was the reply—

"I never puts on My ministers no more than they can bear.
So back you go to the cattle-boats an' preach My Gospel there."
"They must quit drinkin' and swearin,' they mustn't knife on a blow,
They must quit gamblin' their wages, and you must preach it so;
For now those boats are more like Hell than anything else I know."
I didn't want to do it, for I knew what I should get,
An' I wanted to preach Religion, handsome an' out of the wet,
But the Word of the Lord were lain upon me an' I done what I was set.

So the brave lad went on with his duty, turning his cheek to the smiter.

But following that, I knocked him down an' led him up to Grace . . .
The skippers say I'm crazy, but I can prove 'em wrong,
For I am in charge of the lower deck with all that doth belong—
Which they would not give to a lunatic, and the competition so strong.[1]

2. This recovered demoniac was one of the first home missionaries. And in regarding him as a home missionary, let us consider first his mission, next his message, and then his motive.

(1) *The Mission.*—It was a modest commission that he received. He was not required like Moses to guide the nation; he was not called with David to declare God's faithfulness in the great congregation; he was not selected with Paul to confess Christ before kings. The Master set before him the open door of his own house. But we must not regard this domestic commission as less honourable than the wider vocation of evangelists and missionaries. Niagara makes a great noise; it

[1] Kipling, *Seven Seas*: "Mulholland's Contract."

is clothed with rainbows; it is celebrated by painter and poet: yet the fruitfulness of a country does not depend upon a cataract; the landscapes are kept green by ten thousand hidden streams which go softly.

(2) *The Message.*—"Tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." Little good is done by way of disputation and controversy; but to declare what God has done for our soul is a fruitful ministry anywhere. In the narrative of the demoniac as given by St. Luke, we read "*Shew* how great things God hath done for thee." Character is to sustain testimony; those about us are to take knowledge that grace has cured our faults and infirmities, and enabled us to walk purely and graciously.

(3) *The Motive.*—The first motive is love to the Saviour. The next motive is love to the home and friends. A few years ago, in the British House of Peers, a certain speech was delivered on a question concerning the extreme limits of our Indian Empire. That speech just thrilled England from end to end. It was delivered by a plain man of action, who had done his duty in days gone by, and came to the gilded chamber to speak out his convictions. Some say he broke down, and lost the thread of his argument. Certainly, an average local preacher might display better command of language, and a board school pupil teacher might have corrected his faults of style. But just because he could say, "I love India," the wisest and greatest of our land crowded to hear him. Perhaps some of us will consider that the speech was on the wrong side; that the India which the noble speaker loved was not that which most demands our affection; it was India's governing classes rather than her starving millions. But we may learn from the effect produced, the kind of testimony that Jesus wants to-day. There are people in this world who respect you for what you are and what you have done. If you tell them in a few blundering sentences, "I love Christ; He loved me, and gave Himself for me," no one can tell the effect of your poor stammering words. The great revival we pray for is waiting for just such testimony as this.

¶ The Rev. J. B. Ely relates that an oculist just from college commenced business in the city of London, without friends, without money, and without patrons. He became discouraged, until

one day, going down one of the streets, he saw a blind man. Looking into his eyes, he said, "Why don't you have your eyesight restored?" The usual story was told of having tried many physicians and spent all his money without avail. "Come to my office in the morning," said the oculist. The blind man went. When an operation was performed and proved successful, the patient said: "I haven't got a penny in the world. I can't pay you." "Oh yes," said the oculist, "you can pay me, and I shall expect you to do so. There is just one thing I want you to do, and it is very easy. Tell it; tell everybody you see that you were blind, and tell them who it was that healed you."

The Carpenter.

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THE CARPENTER.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in him.—vi. 3.

JESUS had gone up to the city of Nazareth. Once before He had visited it, immediately after His baptism and at the very beginning of His ministry, only to be angrily rejected with furious violence. This time His fame, which was being spread through the land, led them to receive Him with a greater show of welcome. They were eager to hear His words and to see His works. But a second time they turned from Him scornfully. "Whence hath this man these things?" The words may have in them that dark and dreadful meaning which the Pharisees did not hesitate to express more plainly when they ascribed His miracles to the power of the devil. At any rate, the people of Nazareth were offended in Him and went muttering, "Whence hath this man these things? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?"

¶ "Is not this the carpenter?" This is an illuminating question. It throws light; and it throws the light in two directions. When you hold up a lamp or lantern in order to see the face of some one approaching you in the dark, you light up, not only the face of the person approaching you, but you light up your own face as well. When these people ask the question, "Is not this the carpenter?" they light up their own faces and also the face of Jesus.

I.

JESUS WAS A WORKMAN.

The word translated "carpenter" is a more generic term than our English word. It conveys something more than the specific handicraft designated by the latter, and implies gener-

ally a fashioner of articles in wood. Jesus the carpenter was a maker of all such utensils as were useful in the house and in the field. Justin Martyr, who lived near to Christ's own times, tells us that He made ploughs and yokes, as well as the articles we include within the scope of carpentry. He was the fashioner of whatever tended to stability, order, and productiveness. Surely we may see something more than an accidental significance and appropriateness here! His calling was the symbol of the constructive and productive, as opposed to the destructive, principle in the world.

That Jesus, before He began His prophetic career, occupied the lowly state of a carpenter, is of universal, permanent, and, one may add, ever-increasing significance as a symbolic revelation of the genius of the Christian religion. It is by no means a merely outward, indifferent fact, too trivial for mention in even the fullest account of the life of so great a Personage. It has distinct and great ethical value, both as a biographical fact, and as a means of propagating Christian faith. How much that humble, yet not ignoble, occupation signifies as an element in the education of Jesus! What possibilities it provided of keen insight into the heart of human life, and what protection it afforded against the unrealities and insincerities attaching to more favoured social conditions![1]

¶ There is a beautiful tradition, that Joseph, His reputed father, died while Jesus was yet a child, and so He worked, not merely to earn His own living, but to keep the little home together in Nazareth, and Mary and the younger members of the family depended upon His toil. That is a beautiful tradition. It may be true, but I do not press it. But this one fact is of utmost importance—He worked for His living. Oh! that we may derive the strength and comfort from this fact which it is calculated to afford. Business men, you who have been at work all the week, and have been harassed by daily labours, and are weary and tired, and seeking for new inspiration, this Jesus, whose name has become a name of sweetness and love, was not a king upon a throne; He was not for the better part of His life a teacher, with the thrill and excitement of public life to buoy Him up. No; the long years ran on, and He was doing what some of you speak of as "the daily round, the common task."[2]

[1] A. B. Bruce. [2] G. Campbell Morgan.

1. *Jesus, as a workman, is brought into sympathetic relations with the masses of mankind.*—His gracious purpose, when He came to earth, was to fathom all the depths of poor humanity, that He might sympathise and succour to the uttermost. Not to be the Redeemer only, but also the Brother and Friend of man, was the mission of the Son of God. Now, where can a more impressive instance of this be found—a clearer proof that Jesus did actually make Himself like unto His brothers—than when we are told, as in the text, that He became a carpenter? Here He is seen not merely "in fashion as a man," but passing down to man's most tried and toilsome state, that, proving that, He might implicitly experience every other.

He who said, "Be not anxious for the morrow," often needed to trust His heavenly Father for the morrow's bread. As in the wilderness, when ready to perish of hunger, so in the precarious position of a village tradesman, Jesus wrought no miracle to provide bread, or to relieve His own mind, for His first miracle was that in Cana of Galilee. Condescending from the throne of universal providence to live a life of faith for our sakes, the Son trusted the Father before He stood up to preach, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

¶ Probably all of Jesus' apostles were manual labourers except Matthew. We are told expressly that Paul, the greatest of them all, earned his living by working with his hands. Again and again in his letters Paul calls attention to the fact that he has earned his own living by manual labour. Nor was he ashamed of it. He seems to have been proud of his hands because the haircloth had blackened them and the thread had left its marks on them. Listen to him as he says to the elders of Ephesus, who met him down on the sea coast at Miletus: "Ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." The sight of his hands drew them to him, and made them love him all the more. After he had prayed with them they fell on his neck and kissed him—strong men sobbing because they were to see his face no more. These are two facts, then, never to be forgotten, that Jesus, the founder of the Christian religion, was a manual labourer, and the pierced hands into which He will gather the lives of nations and men are hands that have been disciplined by toil. Paul, the apostle, who did more for Christianity than

any other man who has ever lived, also was a manual labourer, and the hands with which he grips the heartstrings of the world are hands that have been stained by toil.[1]

¶ It is a significant fact that not a few high-minded thinkers of modern times, repelled by that insidious blight which works in scenes of frivolity and pomp, have gone forth to live in communities where all take equal share in tilling the soil, shaping the plough and loom, and putting the hand to tasks which are accounted mean. The names of Robert Owen, Laurence Oliphant, Count Tolstoi, together with many men and women who have entered settlements to cultivate rural simplicity, stand for a movement which may yet change our chaotic civilisations. Not only is there an instinctive desire for the keener vitality which comes from strenuous, wholesome physical toil, but the restless sense of race-relations is appeased by such a programme of life. Under these primitive conditions some who have been born to luxury and unearned ease find themselves in more vivid sympathy with the rank and file of their fellow citizens.[2]

¶ There is a pretty story told by Martin Luther of a good bishop who earnestly prayed that God would reveal to him something more than the Bible tells about the childhood of Jesus. At last he had a dream. He dreamed that he saw a carpenter working with saws and hammers and planes, just like any carpenter, and beside him a little boy picking up chips. Then came a sweet-faced woman in a green dress, and called them both to dinner, and set porridge before them. All this the bishop saw in his dream, himself standing behind the door, that he might not be perceived. Then the little boy, spying him, cried out, "Why does that man stand there? Shall he not eat of our porridge with us?" Thereupon the bishop awoke. This charming little dream-fable carries with it a beautiful and an important truth. It is the carpenter's child who wanted all the world to share His porridge with Him, who has conquered the heart of humanity.[3]

2. *He obliterated the distinction between the sacred and the secular.*—No more effectual and impressive method could have been devised for abolishing the false distinction between the sacred and the secular than that of sending the great Messiah to spend the opening years of His manhood in a workshop. The official priesthood at one time put a huge barrier between the sanctuary and the work-a-day world, that needed to be broken down before the prophecies could be fulfilled. The Temple courts at Jerusalem had been hallowed by many a supernatural

[1] C. E. Jefferson. [2] T. G. Selby. [3] J. Halsey.

vision of the Divine Glory, but the new theophany was to be in a scene of common toil. To make One who had wrought with His hands the all-commanding personality of His age, was to prepare men, by an ascending scale of amazement and faith, for the great mystery of His origin and of His after-reign of mediatorial power.

The necessity of secular work is sometimes spoken of among Christians as if it were an evil—a kind of degradation to them—at least a burden and a hindrance—something in spite of which they may retain their Christianity, but which can surely not be helpful to it, or form any part of it. Under the influence of such a feeling, some—especially fresh converts—would fain abandon their secular engagements altogether, and give themselves wholly to what they call a religious life—to meditation, and prayer, and preaching, and duties such as these. But does not the clear daylight of the text dispel such shadows and delusions of morbid or mistaken minds? Jesus is here seen to set His holy seal on worldly work—to make it no more worldly—but Christian, Heavenly, Godlike. Was not His whole life like His seamless robe—of one perfect piece—all of it religious—all of it devoted to God—all of it gleaming alike with the fair colour of holiness? Yet thirty years of it were expended in learning and doing the work of a carpenter, and only three in the sacred office of the Ministry.

¶ As you gaze upon the earliest Christian pictures in the Roman catacombs, you cannot fail to recognise that the conception of Christ which was conveyed to the simple minds of the men of the second and third century by the gay and winsome figure of the Good Shepherd, with the happy sheep nestling on His shoulder, with the pastoral pipes in His hand, blooming in immortal youth, must be very different from that of the men of a later age, for whom the gracious and gentle Pastor has given place to the crucified Sufferer, depicted in countless aspects of misery and woe, from the gaunt and ghastly Crucifixes and Pietas and Entombments of the early Florentines, to the sublime dignities of Michael Angelo and Tintoret and Corregio.[1]

3. *Jesus the carpenter has ennobled manual labour.*—It may be said that this is a truism, and that the Gospel of "the dignity of labour" has become almost a *cant*. It is true the sentiment

[1] Bishop Stubbs.

has been heard before, but how many of us are sufficiently superior to the conventional and artificial distinction of modern society really to believe in the honourableness of handicraft? If people believe in it, why are they so anxious to escape from it? Why is it that apprenticeship in all trades is dropping out of vogue, and that nearly all the youths who leave our schools prefer to seek a miserable clerkship rather than to earn an honourable maintenance by manual toil, and that girls prefer almost anything to domestic service?

¶ In the north of Holland, and about five miles from Amsterdam, there is a shipbuilding and manufacturing town called Zaandam; and in that town a very humble old house is carefully preserved in which a carpenter lodged for a time more than two hundred years ago. Visitors to Zaandam go to see that old house; it is on record that in the year 1814 it was visited by Alexander I., the Czar of Russia. That Emperor went to see it because the carpenter who had lived in it in 1697, and for whose sake the house is still preserved, was no less a personage than one of his own predecessors—Peter the Great, the creator of the modern Russian Empire.[1]

4. *Jesus the carpenter is an example to all good workmen.*—The conviction cannot be too forcibly urged that the only dishonourable employments are immoral or dishonest ones. The man who makes an honest plough or table is as honourable as the man who makes a poem or a sermon, and he *may* be as much of a gentleman. "No work can degrade you unless you first degrade your work." It is not *work*, but bad workmanship, that is disgraceful. We know the kind of ploughs and tables, windows and doors, the Carpenter of Nazareth made; and unfortunately we know, only too well, the kind of thing many a modern carpenter puts into suburban villas, and calls it a door or a window-frame. Such carpentering is degrading, but it is the scamping and not the work that is low. You may not know much of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*; but every bit of honest work *is* an imitation of Christ.[2]

¶ A recent writer on Japan says: "If you visit Kyoto to order something from one of the greatest porcelain makers in the world—one whose products are better known in London and

[1] C. Jerdan. [2] J. Halsey.

Paris than even in Japan—you will find the factory to be a wooden cottage in which no English farmer would live. The greatest maker of *cloisonne* vases, who may ask you fifty pounds for something five inches high, produces his miracles behind a two-storied frame dwelling, containing perhaps six small rooms. The best girdles of silk made in Japan, and famous throughout the empire, are woven in a house that cost scarcely one hundred pounds to build." Robes of immaculate righteousness, delicate and radiant character, and miracles of goodness at which other worlds marvel, are still produced in some of the mean byways and obscure surroundings of the world. "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."[1]

5. *But His work was not only good; it was the work of self-sacrifice.*—A famous English painter, Mr. Holman Hunt, gave to the world in 1873 a great religious picture, representing Jesus in the workshop at the close of the day. When we look at it, we see that the earthen floor is well covered with shavings, which have come from the planing bench near where Jesus stands. Close by the bench is a trestle of native form; and the large hand-saw has been left in the wood, not yet cut through. Jesus has thrown out His arms as He yawns in weariness; and His shadow formed on the wall in the level evening sunlight, as it is seen with alarm by His mother Mary, looks like that of a man crucified. Mr. Holman Hunt has called this picture "The Shadow of Death."

II.

Jesus had Brothers and Sisters.

Are there not some of us to whom it never occurred before that Jesus had brothers and sisters just as we have? Indeed, everything that is human in the life of Jesus is to some of us more or less unreal. We accept the statements of theology concerning His humanity, but with a certain mental reserve. Even when one of the sacred writers himself tells us "He was tempted in all points like as we are," we doubt whether he quite meant all he said; and to some of us, it is to be feared, the temptation in the wilderness is little more than a scenic display.

[1] T. G. Selby.

We cannot think of Jesus as boy and man, as son and brother, entering like others into ordinary human relationships. We must needs picture Him with a halo of unearthly light about His head, and, as Professor Rendel Harris has recently pointed out, even a writer like Dean Farrar cannot speak of the "boy" Jesus without printing the word with a capital B, as if to suggest that He was never like other children. The truth is, many of us are Apollinarians without knowing it.[1]

¶ Assuming, as we reasonably may, that Joseph died some time before Jesus was thirty years old, we may find in this fact some new points of contact with the sympathy of Christ. The father being dead, Jesus as eldest son would become the head of the household. On Him would now devolve the charge of supporting Mary and those who were still children, and He would become the guide and counsellor of those nearer to Him in age. How blessed, then, in all our hours of lonely anguish, to remember that Jesus lived as a son with the widow, and as a brother with the fatherless, and that all their griefs were mingled in the cup He drank on earth![2]

1. *This is the consecration of the family.*—We have often been told that the first thirty years were the long and patient training for His life-work. Is it not rather that these thirty years were the patient doing of that work? Was it not as a lad of twelve that He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And from that hour assuredly He ever did His Father's business. We see Him in that little home. Rising early He hastens to help His widowed mother with such household service as He can render. He hurries to bear the pitcher to the well. All day He seeks to bring into the home some bit of sunny brightness, some cheery confidence, some holy peace. And in His work He is able to make things such as every carpenter makes—things that minister to the pleasure and service of men. Thus is He doing the business of His Father in heaven day after day and year after year through all those thirty years. For us the great lesson is this—that the only religion a man has, is what he has *always*, not sometimes—what he is in *everything*, not just now and then.

In this connection another thought occurs. As stepping into Joseph's place, Jesus would become not only the chief

[1] G. Jackson. [2] T. V. Tymms.

bread-winner and comforter of the family, but on Him would fall the duty of conducting the daily worship which was never omitted in the home of devout Jews. We may think of Him, therefore, as reading the Scriptures, offering prayer, and at special seasons maintaining all those religious rites which were of a private character.

¶ We who are brothers and sisters, are we doing what we can to make the home all that it ought to be? Do we diligently cultivate what some one has happily called the "art of living together"? "Is he a Christian?" asked some one of Whitefield concerning another. "I do not know," was the answer; "I have never seen him at home."[1]

2. *It is also the creation of a larger family.*—When "one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee, he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." *He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven*—he is the man who stands nearest to Christ. Others might call James "the Lord's brother"; he called himself the "servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ." The new relationship was deeper, more sacred even than the old. And that same fellowship, with all of Divine blessedness that goes with it, is open to us to-day. Let us come to God, let us lay our hands in His, let us say to Him, "Lo, I come to do thy will," and even of us Jesus will say, "Behold my brother, and sister, and mother."

III.

Jesus was a Cause of Offence.

"They were offended in him." What was the cause of offence?

1. *He could not be measured by the stature of His family.*—The question shows us that these men in Nazareth thought that one can account for a man simply by knowing his parents

[1] G. Jackson.

and brothers and sisters. There was nothing wonderful in Joseph nor anything extraordinary in Mary, and therefore there could be nothing great in Jesus. But in reasoning thus these people were mistaken. There was nothing wonderful about the parents of Muhammad, or of Luther, or of Goethe, or of Shakespeare. You cannot tell what a man is, simply by knowing what his parents were. God has something to do with the making of a man. These people in Nazareth supposed that under equal circumstances characters must be equal. They adopted the principle that one child must be as bright as another, and that one boy must be as good as another if they grow up in the same home. All of which is of course an error. These people overestimated the importance of circumstances, and forgot that God has something to do with the making of a man. Their great mistake was that they left out God.

¶ One does not look for a bird of paradise to be hatched in the nest of crossed sticks built by the rook, and these critics scarcely expected to see the brilliant Deliverer who had been the subject of prophecy for twenty centuries emerging from a cottage. The Hindus compare a pretender to a crow which has stuck a pomegranate flower into its tail. The murmurings in the synagogue, bandied from lip to lip as the assembly poured forth into the street, implied that Jesus had no hereditary genius or refinement, that He belonged to an average stock, and that He was attempting a task too big for His antecedents.[1]

2. *He had begun to teach without having had the special training of a teacher.*—It is much easier for a worldly soul to pay homage to the trained scholar, however superficial his insight, than to an artisan who claims to know the mind of God, and to find prophetic foreshadowings of his own work in the Old Testament Scriptures. But over-specialisation may sometimes involve intellectual or spiritual suicide, and God has to go outside the caste to find a fitting instrument of His will. Michael Angelo did not spring from a family of sculptors; Shakespeare was not reared in a cloister of learning; nor did John Bunyan illustrate the law of hereditary genius. Jesus Christ began the work which culminated in the Sacrifice of the Cross as a layman, and it was resented,

[1] T. G. Selby.

¶ "Who would do the scullion work in the great household of humanity if there were no slaves?" This was the question that perplexed the great philosophers of antiquity. This was the question which Christ answered by making Himself the slave of mankind and classing Himself among the scullions.[1]

¶ "Is not this the carpenter?" Yes, thank God! It *was* the carpenter, and something more. For you *can* be a carpenter, and something more. Lowliness of station is not exclusive of the highest gifts, nor incompatible with the highest culture, nor inimical to the highest usefulness. You may be carpenter and prophet, carpenter and poet, just as you can be house-drudge and angel.[2]

¶ In the Louvre in Paris there is a famous painting by Murillo. It is entitled, "The Miracle of San Diego." A door opens and two noblemen and a priest enter a kitchen. They are amazed to find that all the kitchen maids are angels. One is handling a water pot, another a joint of meat, a third a basket of vegetables, a fourth is tending the fire. The thought of the artist is that it is in toil and drudgery we develop qualities which are celestial.[3]

The great Gods pass through the great Time-hall,
  Stately and high;
The little men climb the low clay wall
  To gape and spy;
"We wait for the Gods," the little men cry,
  "But these are our brothers passing by."

The great Gods pass through the great Time-hall
  With veiléd grace;
The little men crowd the low clay wall
  To bow the face;
"But still are our brothers passing by!
  Why tarry the Gods?" the little men sigh.

The great Gods pass through the great Time-hall;
  Who can may see.
The little men nod by the low clay wall,
  So tired they be;
"'Tis weary waiting for Gods," they yawn,
  "There's a world o' men, but the Gods are gone."[4]

[1] C. W. Stubbs. [2] J. Halsey. [3] C. E. Jefferson.
[4] A. H. Begbie, *The Rosebud Wall*, 19.

3. *But the chief cause of offence was the claim that He made for Himself.*—This is the earliest offence given by the Gospel; and it is deeply suggestive, because it is still the earliest offence taken by each individual soul. What is the ground of complaint here spoken of? Briefly stated, it is the homeliness of Christianity. Men refused to recognise a thing which grew amid such mean surroundings. Had Jesus claimed anything else than a Divine message there would have been no objection to His mean surroundings. Had He claimed merely the inspiration of human genius no one would have seen any contradiction in the poverty of His environment. For all human conditions the Jew prescribed toil; he desired that every man should learn a trade, should live as if he had to earn his bread. But when he came to speak of man's relation to *God*, that changed the spirit of his dream. To him the attitude of God was ever one of *rest*. His God lay in the secret place of His pavilion, with the curtains drawn, and the doors shut, and the windows deafened! He could work only through His angels; He must not soil His hands with mundane things. He who professed to be a Son of God must be a child of mystery. He must have nothing homely about Him. He must be all soul, no body; all wings, no feet; all poetry, no prose; all heaven, no earth. And is not this also *our* first ideal of the Divine Life? In our moments of religious awakening we deny that morality is evangelical. We are offended when a preacher cries, "Salvation is goodness, work is worship, integrity is the service of God!" We say, "These are common things, homely things, things for the exchange and the market-place; you will see them in Nazareth every day."[1]

¶ Jesus has drawn very near to us in our generation. We have been made to feel Him as a Brother, as a living, breathing man, touched with all the feeling of our infirmities. Back in the Gospels in their primal form we have gone, to let the old tale tell upon us in its simplicity. All this has been for the good. Jesus has become alive to many to whom He has been only a theological mummy. Thank God for that. Only remember the nearness of neighbourhood had its own peculiar perils of old when He was on earth, and that these perils exist still. It is just because they knew Him so

[1] G. Matheson.

familiarly and felt Him so close in ancient Nazareth, that they rejected Him.[1]

¶ Robert Hichens, in one of his books, tells the story of an artist who desired to paint a picture to be called "A Sea Urchin." Says the painter in one place, "I had made studies of the sea for that picture. I had indicated the wind by the shapes of the flying foam, journeying inland to sink on the fields. I wanted my figure. I could not find him. Yet I was in a sea village among sea folks. The children's legs there were browned with the salt water. They had clear blue eyes, sea-eyes; that curious light hair which one associates with the sea. But they wouldn't do for my purpose. They were unimaginative. As a fact, they knew the sea too well. They were familiar with it, as the little London clerk is familiar with Fleet Street or Chancery Lane. . . . These children chucked the sea under the chin." He goes on to say how he searched for a child who was unfamiliar with the sea. In the heart of a London slum he found what he sought. He took the child home with him, told him of the voices that cry in the sea, of the onward gallop of the white horses, of its unceasing motions, its calm and its tempests; he played music to him in which the sound of waters could be heard. And at last he was rewarded by beholding the wonder of the sea itself dawn in the eyes of the London street Arab. The spirit of the ocean had entered into him, and he was all a-wonder.[2]

[1] Canon Scott Holland. [2] J. Steele.

Retirement for Rest.

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Retirement for Rest.

And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.—vi. 31.

This is one of Christ's invitations. It is one of the occasions upon which He said "Come." The particular invitation is to retirement, the purpose of the retirement being to obtain rest. The text may be taken up in five parts—

1. The Invitation.
2. The Need of Rest.
3. The Use of Retirement.
4. How to find Rest in Retirement.
5. The Gains of Retirement.

I.

The Invitation.

i. *Christ's use of the word "Come."*

The word "come" occurs more than three thousand times in the Bible; and in about thirteen hundred places it is a word of encouragement. It is one of the first words Jesus uttered after entering upon His public ministry—the word to the two disciples who asked Him where His abode was, "Come and see" (John i. 39). It is one of the last words we hear Him speak from His place in heaven, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come" (Rev. xxii. 17). It is the key-note of His ministry. It distinguishes the Gospel from the Law. God's message to Moses is "Draw not nigh hither" (Ex. iii. 5); for the old covenant is a witness to the separation from God

which sin has made. Christ's message to all is "Come unto me" (Matt. xi. 28); for He has "made peace through the blood of his cross." It is true that Christ has sometimes to say "Depart" (Luke xiii. 27), but His characteristic word is "Come."

There are seven invitations, which may be arranged in order.

1. *The Invitation to Zacchæus* (Luke xix. 9).—This is (1) a *personal* call. A letter addressed to "Anybody" would find its way to nobody. Zacchæus could not pass this call to another. It is (2) a call that *hastens.* "Make haste"—"to-day." The evening before the Chicago fire Mr. Moody preached on "Now is the accepted time," and told his hearers to take that text home and think about it. Some of them had no time to think; the fire came and devoured them. He never repeated that advice. It is (3) a *humbling* call—"Come down." In a certain hotel visitors are directed downstairs to find the elevator.

'Tis only lowly hearts can reach
The home above the skies;
In lowly ways they find the road,
By coming down they rise.

But, above all, it is (4) an *encouraging* call, "To-day I must abide at thy house." Jesus has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.[1]

2. *The Invitation to the Heavy-laden* (Matt. xi. 28).—(1) The invitation to Zacchæus was personal, but it was also universal. There is none but is included in the title "sinner." The invitation to the heavy-laden is just as personal, but it may not be of so universal an application. There are some who are not heavy-laden—at least not yet. In the one case it is a state, in the other it is a feeling. We are all sinners whether we feel it or not; only those who feel it labour and are heavy-laden. (2) Again, it is those who labour and are heavy-laden that are most likely to accept the invitation. They have come some way themselves. The historian of America, Francis Parkman, has a wonderful story to tell of the success of the early missionaries among the Hurons, but they had no success until the Hurons had suffered fearfully from the ferocity of the Iroquois and were

[1] H. Thorne.

in daily dread. An Indian tribe, after a toilsome march, pitched their tents on the banks of a mighty river and called it Alabama, which means "Here we rest."

Knowing that whate'er befalls us
He will order for the best;
We can say with hearts confiding,—
"Alabama! Here we rest."

3. *The Invitation to Discipleship.* "Come, follow me" (Luke xviii. 22).—For the call to rest is not a call to idleness. It is a call to rest of conscience. And no good work can be done without a conscience at rest. It is a call to service such as Christ Himself was occupied with, who "went about doing good." It is a call to surrender. He, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. The rich young ruler refused to make it, but the disciples were able to say, "Lo, we have left all and have followed thee." It is a call to the surrender not only of the things of this world, but also of the personal will. "Come, follow me," was in invitation to say, "Not my will but thine be done."

4. *The Invitation to Retirement* (Mark vi. 31).—This is the present text. And here it is to be noticed that one of the leading thoughts of St. Mark's Gospel is that the life of Jesus is a life of alternate rest and victory, withdrawal and working. In the first chapter we find the retirement in Nazareth, the coming forth to be baptized; the withdrawal into the wilderness, the walk in Galilee; the rest in the cool sanctuary, where the dawn breaks upon the kneeling man, and the going forth to preach to the heated and struggling crowd. Thus, once more, the withdrawal to the Mount of Olives is followed by the great conflict of the redeeming Passion, while that is succeeded by the withdrawal into the sepulchre. It is the book of the wars of the Lord and the rest of the Lord. The first rest was in Nazareth; the first trophies were the four Apostles. The last rest is in the heaven of heavens, "in the privacy of glorious light"; the last victory (for this great book never ended with the words "they were afraid") is diffused over all time—"the Lord working with them, and confirming the work with signs following." [1]

[1] W. Alexander, *The Leading Ideas of the Gospels*, 61.

5. *The Invitation to Peter* (Matt. xiv. 29), "Come."—Our Lord invites without being asked to invite. But on this occasion He did not invite Peter to walk on the water until Peter said, "Bid me come unto thee." That was the disciple's first mistake. Christ never fails to give His invitation, and it is unwise as well as ungracious to ask to be invited. Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and told Him to cast Himself down from it. Peter would have succumbed to that temptation. He would have gone where he was not called to go, hoping that it would turn out all right. Still, Jesus said "Come," and Peter would have been held up in spite of his first mistake if he had trusted the Lord sufficiently. But it needs strong faith to be delivered from the consequence of our own follies, and the very folly itself is apt to weaken faith.

6. *The Invitation to the Dead* (John xi. 43), "Come forth."—It was a call to Lazarus, and he obeyed it. "The hour is at hand when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth." But not like Lazarus, to spend a little time longer on the earth. The call to come forth from the grave will be followed immediately by the call to the great Judgment.

7. *The Invitation to the Inheritance* (Matt. xxv. 34), "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."—The final call is not universal. There are now those on the right hand and those on the left. For the first time we meet with the word "Depart." For it is after all the invitations have been given that the separation is made. Men separate themselves, some accepting, some rejecting. The "come" to eternal life, which is the most blessed of all the invitations, has its counterpart in the "depart" into eternal death.

ii. *The Occasion of this Invitation.*

If we look back a little way into the narrative, we shall understand better the occasion of this invitation. In the beginning of the chapter we are told that our Lord sent out His disciples to labour in the instruction of the people. They must commence under His own guidance the work they were to carry on after His death. They performed their mission

with great ardour and success. A deep interest was created, and the crowds thronged around them till they had not time so much as to eat. When they returned, their Master saw their exhaustion, and made provision for it. They needed repose of mind as well as of body—the quiet that is required after excitement even more than after toil.

Another event recorded in this chapter had probably a share in this call to retirement. It seems to have been about the time of their return to Christ that the news came of the death of John the Baptist. It no doubt sent a strange shock to their heart. Some of them had been his followers, and knew him intimately; and all of them revered him as a Divine messenger of extraordinary power and faithfulness. The details of banqueting and blood, the man of God meeting his executioners in the gloom of the dungeon, the glare of the lights above on the maiden and her frightful gift, strike us still with a shudder, and may help us to realise how those felt it who were in the presence of the event. It was not merely that they had lost a friend, but that God seemed indifferent to His own cause and its truest witnesses. Their faith must have been sorely tried, questionings must have been stirred within them to which they could find no answer; and it was to tranquillise their spirit, as well as to refresh exhausted mind and body, that our Lord said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."[1]

iii. *Christ's Thoughtfulness for His Disciples.*

Whether it was toil or trouble that burdened the disciples most they were all in need of rest. "Christ," says Matthew Henry, "takes cognisance of the frights of some and of the toils of others of His disciples and finds suitable relief for both." The invitation shows the care which Jesus took in the training of His disciples, and at the same time the necessity for effective service of intervals of quiet fellowship with Him.

There is a kindly considerateness in the words of Christ, a friendly sympathy with what may be called the lesser sufferings of our nature, which may give us confidence in still putting

[1] John Ker.

before Him the smallest wants and weaknesses. He had an end in view that took in the whole world, but He was not of those iron-hearted philanthropists who are cruel to men that they may work out their scheme for man, and who break their instruments in the passion for their theory. The zeal of God's house consumed Him; He had compassion on the multitudes, and spent Himself for them; but He devised hours of repose for His weary fellow-workers.

It is a fine encouragement to thoughtfulness for others. Do we find ourselves in need of rest? Do we look forward to our annual holiday? What of others? What of the myriads of our brethren, pent up in mean streets, prisoners of the counting house and the shop, slaves of the mill and the mine, the poor and heavy-laden of every nameless class to whom these words are bitter mockery, for whom no changing seasons bring cessation from toil and weariness?

¶ A well-known visitor among the poor found living in a notorious court a woman who was known as "the Button-holes Queen," who often gave work and wage, poor though she was, to those who were poorer than herself. Reserved as she appeared to be, she was at last induced to tell her story, which accounted for the interest she took in the poor girls around her—and poor they were—think of the misery of making 2880 button-holes in order to earn 10s., and having "no time even to cry!" Her story was this: Her daughter had been apprenticed to a milliner at the West End. She was just over sixteen, and a bright young Christian. She got through her first season without breaking down; but the second was too much for her. She did not complain, but one day she was brought home in a cab, having broken a blood vessel; and there she lay, propped up by pillows, her face white as death, except for two spots where it had been flecked by her own blood. To use the mother's own words: "She smiled as she saw me, and then we carried her in; and when the others were gone, she clung round my neck, and laying her pretty head on my shoulder, she whispered, 'Mother, my own mother, I've come home to die!'" Killed by late hours! She lingered for three months, and then she passed away, but not before she had left a message, which became the life inspiration of her mother: "For my sake, be kind to the girls like me"; and that message, with God's blessing, may make some of you think and resolve, as it did the poor "Button-hole Queen."[1]

[1] Alfred Rowland.

Thro' burden and heat of the day
  How weary the hands and the feet
That labour with scarcely a stay,
  Thro' burden and heat!

  Tired toiler whose sleep shall be sweet,
Kneel down, it will rest thee to pray:
  Then forward, for daylight is fleet.

Cool shadows show lengthening and grey,
  Cool twilight will soon be complete:
What matters this wearisome way
  Thro' burden and heat?[1]

iv. *A Defeated Purpose.*

Neither Christ nor His disciples found the rest they so sorely needed. When they crossed to their desert place where they had hoped to be by themselves apart, they found the place crowded with a waiting throng that had hurried round the lake on foot. The work had to be begun again, and the repose seemed further off than ever. In the attitude of Jesus to this new and unexpected obligation we get a glimpse into the depths of His great heart. An ordinary man would have resented the appearance of a crowd which so effectively dispelled all hope of repose and deprived Him and His of the rest they so sorely needed. But not so Jesus. When He landed and saw the great crowds, He had pity upon them and "began to teach them many things." Those who had come to Him in such a way He could in no wise cast out. The seeming annoyance He accepted as a Divine opportunity, and, tired and disappointed as He and His disciples were, He gladly and uncomplainingly began again the great work which His Father had given Him to do.

¶ It is worth pondering that Jesus deliberately sought for Himself and His disciples to escape from the crowd. It is also worth pondering that the escape proved impossible. In such a world as ours we are sometimes compelled by circumstances, or by regard for some high moral law, or for the sake of a needy brother, to act against our better knowledge. We know very well that we must spare ourselves, or our strength—and to that extent, our

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

efficiency—will be impaired. Yet the circumstances of our life so arrange themselves that to spare ourselves is impossible; and so long as we have strength to stand upon our feet, we must go on with our work. These exacting demands, which seem at times so cruel, have no doubt their high compensations both here and hereafter; but while we must learn the stern obligation of service from the willingness of Jesus to do what He could for the crowd at the very time that He so yearned to be alone with His disciples, we have also to learn from His desire that they should go apart—and perhaps many of us need this lesson still more—how indispensable is rest and loneliness to all continued and effective work.[1]

II.

The Need of Rest.

1. It is necessary for the *body*. The physician will tell you that to the ceaseless activity of our modern lives he can trace the nervous debility, the feverish excitement, the anxious face, the craving for stimulant, the premature decay of vital force.

Imagine the hardship endured by a young girl who stands behind a counter all day long with hardly an hour's rest even for meals. From eight in the morning till nine or ten at night she has to be ready to speak pleasantly to every comer, to be patient with the most fastidious and thoughtless customers; though her feet ache and her head swims, and she feels sometimes ready to drop from sheer fatigue

¶ Dr. Hugh Macmillan[2] describes a visit which he paid to the workshop of a worker in amber beads in Damascus. The workman took a lump of rough amber and put it on the turning lathe. After some fragments were shaved off he put it away and took another piece, shaved off a little and put it away also, and in this way went over all the pieces of amber that were meant to form the necklace. Then he went over the pieces again one after another, rounding them a little more and laying them aside. He repeated the process a third time and a fourth, till at last each bead was all that he wanted it to be. Why did he not finish one bead at a time? Once he had it on the lathe, why did he not work at it till it was perfect? Because he knew the nature of amber. A wood-turner will work at his piece of

[1] J. E. McFadyen.

[2] *The Clock of Nature*, 193.

wood till he has shaped it into the article that he wants. But the amber-worker knows that the amber will fly to pieces if it does not get a rest. For amber is a great conductor of electricity, and the motion of the lathe fills it with electricity. So he gives it rest and lets it recover itself before he takes it up again.

2. It is necessary for the *mind*. The mind is dependent upon the body. But even apart from that it seems to be necessary that we should learn at times to look away from things as well as at them if we are to see clearly and soundly It must, like the eye, rest in darkness if it is to preserve its health. There are some who reckon every pause in active thought as so much lost time; but when the mind is lying fallow it may be laying up capacity of stronger growth. If we shall be condemned for burying our talents in the earth, we shall also be condemned for compelling others to bury theirs. One of our modern poets makes a pathetic appeal to us to take time to consider and to give others time.

> Old things need not be therefore true,
> O brother men, nor yet the new:
> Ah, still awhile the old retain,
> And yet consider it again!
>
> Alas! the old world goes its way,
> And takes its truth from each new day;
> They do not quit, nor can retain,
> Far less consider it again.

3. It is necessary for the *spirit*. There are cases in which there may be a constant strain of active religious work which at last deadens feeling and produces formality. This is one of the dangers to be guarded against in seasons of strong religious excitement, in what are called revival movements; and we should either try to keep the movement healthful by dealing with the understanding and conscience as well as the emotions, or we should interpose a quiet, thoughtful interval.

¶ A few years ago I had a dear friend, who was, as the Apostle counsels, "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He had a hand in every congregational agency and some outside. He was at every one's call for help or service. His evenings were all occupied with meetings of various kinds

or visiting his district. He used laughingly to say he never had a leisure hour. Once at a meeting the hymn was sung—

> Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
> Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone,

and at the close he remarked, half-smilingly, half-sadly, "Well, however it may be with you, I have no time to be holy! If I am to be holy it must just be through the hurry and pressure of daily life, with the help of such oddments of time as are at my disposal." Not long after, he was laid aside for some months, seriously ill. At first he fretted about his work, but soon he began to realise what it meant. The Lord was with him in the sick-room, giving him revelations of His abounding love. He had now got "time to be holy." When he returned among us again, all felt that he was changed. Some said that his illness had chastened and mellowed him. He said, "The good Lord saw that I had no leisure to eat bread, and He took me aside into a quiet place to rest a while. He was with me and blessed me there."[1]

III.

The Use of Retirement.

1. *It is a remedy for the perplexities of life.*—The disciples had just experienced the shock of a great sorrow. John the Baptist had been done to death. The deed had come upon them as an awful collision with their rosiest expectancies. The great Deliverer was near; the Kingdom was at hand; the Divine sovereignty was about to be established; on the morrow He would be on the throne! And yet, here was the pioneer of the Kingdom, in the very dawning of the victory, destroyed by the powers of the world. The disciples were stunned and bewildered. The world of their visions and imaginations tottered like a house of dreams. And it was in this season of mental confusion that our Lord called them apart to rest. The retirement will help them to realise the reality of the invisible, the immediacy of things not seen, and will place the things of time and the world in their proper place.

2. *It is an escape from the distractions of life.*—"There were

[1] W. T. Fleck.

many coming and going." There is a strangely exciting interest about a multitude. It whips up the life to a most unhealthy speed and tension. And the peril is that we do not realise the intensity when we are in it. When we are on board ship we do not realise how noisy the engines have been until for a moment they cease. We are not conscious of the roar and haste of the traffic of Ludgate Hill until we turn aside into St. Paul's.[1]

¶ Alike in the Church and in the world, a spirit of unrest has taken possession of all ranks and classes. It infects those whose hearts are surrendered to our Lord, and sends them hurrying from church to church; from service to service; from one form of philanthropy to another. It takes possession of the mere pleasure-seekers, so that their very amusements become a toil, as the sunken eyes and the wearied face reveal the utter exhaustion of a London season. And what shall I say of those who, from choice or from necessity, are toiling amid the teeming populations of our large cities? Work, work, work is the cry which day by day arises from the vast labour-fields of England. On and on the huge machine is ever moving; one after another of the hands by which it is plied falls down exhausted; for a moment there is a pause, until the vacant place is filled; then onward again it moves, commencing afresh with redoubled vigour its never-ceasing whirl.[2]

¶ Most people in London look tired. Look at the rush in our streets. A boy from the country once said to a friend of mine, "It looks as if a great many people were ill, and all the rest were rushing for the doctors." A fine description that! It was not only the rush that he saw, but the sadness too.[3]

¶ The injunction which insults me every time I travel by the Underground is "Please hurry on for the lift." The "please" is in diamond type, and you need a microscope to see it. The "hurry" you can read a mile away. Hurry, then, by all means, for we could not live if we did not kill ourselves to get somewhere else![4]

3. *It is an opportunity of making life complete.*—There is a theory that to work is to live. But work is not life. The common adage that "to work is to pray" is useful enough if it comes as a corrective to idleness. But life is not fulfilled when the attention is fastened upon the moving activities of

[1] J. H. Jowett.
[2] Bishop Wilkinson.
[3] D. Davies.
[4] C. F. Aked.

the world's great laws. We must also see their purpose. There is in the great order of things not only a length and a breadth but also a depth. The man who is leading the life of prayer is not merely the man who says his prayers morning and evening, who gathers the members of his household for family worship, and who is regular in his attendance upon the public ordinances of religion. The man of prayer is he whose work in the world is the stronger because it manifests the sense of God's nearness; about whom the casual stranger feels that there is a background, a hidden life, a fountain of living water from wells of salvation that our father Jacob gave us not. The man of God lives among his own people, sharing their life, knowing the same joys and the same tears. But he is a presence that makes them strong. For all he is, as they said of Elisha, "the holy man of God that passeth by us continually."[1]

¶ Botanists tell us that plant-life is built up chiefly from elements found in the atmosphere. The oak-plants which you grow in glasses containing nothing but a little water furnish a familiar illustration of this fact. In like manner human character is built up, to no small extent, out of surrounding social influences. Like an atmosphere, unseen and scarcely felt, society contributes largely to make us what we are. "It is not good," therefore, "that man should be alone." Now one great function of society is to afford relaxation from the strain of stern individual work—a relaxation that shall not be unfruitful of advantage, a rest in which we shall be quietly taking in the sunshine of cheerfulness, the moist breath of sympathy, and the vigorous breezes of a bracing public opinion. In intercourse with our fellows, thought, feeling, and imagination are drawn out without exertion on our part, new ideas are gained, while old impressions are modified through being reviewed in new lights.[2]

¶ You talk about the companionship of towns. Do not forget the loneliness of towns. There is far more fellowship in little places than in the jostle and the crowd of Babylon. We hardly see each other in the city, we have so little time for social intercourse. And nothing is easier in the city than for friendships to become little else than names. It is in view of that we get our holidays. A holiday is not selfish, it is social. It is the golden opportunity of God to put our tattered friendships in repair. It gives us leisure to approach each

[1] J. G. Simpson. [2] E. W. Shalders.

other, and mingle with a freedom that is sweet, and feel, what here we are so apt to lose, the warmth and the reality of brotherhood. How little time some of you business men have to give to your wives and to your children! Some of you hardly know your children, and some of your children hardly know you. Now use your holiday to put that right. Give them your leisure, and be happy with them. Begin to play the father for a little, which is a different thing from playing the fool.[1]

IV.

How to Find Rest in Retirement.

1. *In Variety of Scene or Change of Work.*

You cannot but observe how varied the Bible is as you read it; how, with the same truth all through, history succeeds poetry, and practical precepts follow up the most moving appeals; you cannot but see how Christ leads His disciples from the excitement of Jerusalem to the quiet of Bethany, takes them from the midst of the multitude to the fields and hillsides; and one purpose no doubt was that spiritual religion might not be lost through sensationalism. We have times of depression when we blame the temptations of Satan and the coldness of our own hearts, and no doubt we should jealously guard against the insidious chill that comes from these; but when we have earnestly struggled all in vain, it may be time to inquire whether we have not been losing our proper religious feeling through over-excitement, or the tension of too constant activity. This is the hazard that ministers, missionaries, and Christians devotedly given to sacred work have to avoid—not to go on in even the best of works till they become barren external exercises, but to pause or turn to some other side of Christian occupation. This may be one of the ways of not becoming "weary in well-doing."

¶ The wholesome and happy holiday should have its own proper occupation. As William Cowper sings—

> 'Tis easy to resign a toilsome place,
> But not to manage leisure with a grace;
> Absence of occupation is not rest,
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.

[1] G. H. Morrison.

And Pascal, throwing all his power and passion into this subject, says:—"Nothing is so insupportable to man as to be completely idle. For he then feels all his nothingness, all his loneliness, all his insufficiency, all his weakness, all his emptiness. At once in his idleness, and from the deeps of his soul, there will arise weariness, gloom, sadness, vexation, disappointment, despair."[1]

¶ What was the method of Solomon with the men who were engaged in building the Temple? They worked two months in Jerusalem, and then they were sent for a month to Lebanon to hew down cedars and quarry marbles. Among the mountains of Lebanon they would breathe fresh air, see grand sights, inhale the fragrance of the cedar forests, which had a wonderful healing power in them; and with new strength and vigour, inspired by their new surroundings, they would prepare in one month sufficient materials to last them for their work—in shaping the walls and partitions and roofs of the Temple—during their two months' residence in the city.[2]

2. *In Communion with Nature.*

Christ invites His disciples into a "desert place," not a waste sandy desert, as many figure to themselves, but a thinly peopled region away from towns and crowds. There can be no doubt that it was to the country east of the Sea of Galilee, among rolling hills and grassy plains and quiet mountain flocks, with the blue sky overhead and distant glimpses of the deeper blue of the lake. Christ knew every nook among the hills. He had wandered among them since He was a boy. Where the grass was greenest He had dreamed His dreams, and read the writing of His Father's hand. And now, looking upon His wearied twelve, He thought of one choice spot He had long loved, and He said, "Come ye apart and rest a while." For Him, there had been rest in nature. For them, there was to be rest in nature. Taught by the breeze, the mountain, and the stream, they were to come to their true selves again. They were to bathe in that deep and mighty silence that spreads itself out beyond the noise of man. They were to let the peace of lonely places sink with benediction on their souls.

> Hackneyed in business, wearied at the oar,
> Which thousands, once fast chained to quit no more,
> The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
> Pant for the refuge of some rural shade,

[1] A. Whyte. [2] Hugh Macmillan.

For regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
Traces of Eden are still seen below,
Where mountain, river, forest, field, and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest where the deer securely roves,
The fall of waters, and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.[1]

3. *In Intercourse with Men and Books.*

The wish to cultivate a life of repose separated from the active world has shown itself in almost every religion. There is a yearning for it in certain natures; and if the state of society be very corrupt, and the mind quiet and self-inspective, it becomes very strong. We know how early and how often it has shown itself in Christianity. It is many centuries since the monks of Egypt hid themselves among the dreary sands of the Thebaid; and the most lonely islands of the Hebrides have the cells still standing in which solitary recluses, who found Iona too social, sought to perfect their spiritual life. Perhaps most of us have felt times of weariness of the toil and temptation and strife, when we have thought that if we might reach some isolation of this kind we could become wiser and better. And yet few things have been more repeatedly proved by experience than that tranquillity of spirit is not to be attained in this way. The very austerities and penances that these men practised is one of the surest tokens that they had not gained quiet. They had to do battle with their own hearts, and the conflict was all the fiercer that it was a single combat. There are times when complete retirement for prayer and heart communion is good for every one. He can never stand firmly among others who has not learned to be alone; but the retirement should never shut out thoughts of one's fellow-men, and should prepare for renewed intercourse with them. When Christ invited His disciples to come apart into a desert place, it was that they might be more in each other's company. He wished to give them an opportunity for the quiet interchange of experience which they could not enjoy in their work among the multitude.

[1] Cowper, *Retirement.*

¶ Good books are as necessary for the healthy mind on a holiday as good bread is necessary for the healthy body. And a wise and experienced holiday-maker will no more neglect to go to the bookseller than he will neglect to go to the baker. And what an intense delight are good books, new and old, on an autumn holiday! New books that we have not had time to read in the city, and old books that we want to read over and over again, as Jowett read Boswell for the fiftieth time, and as Spurgeon read Bunyan for the hundredth time; the best novel of the year, the best poem, the best biography, the best book of travels, or science, or philosophy, or of learned or experienced religion; and old books—our old Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Hooker, and Milton, and Bunyan, and Butler. It is only well-experienced and wary holiday-makers who can tell to new beginners what memorable summer mornings and summer evenings can be spent in the society of such old and long-tried friends as these.[1]

¶ In the most impressionable years of my life I came under the influence of a teacher who was philosopher, historian, and poet—the late Thomas Goadby, Principal of the Midland Baptist College. Nature he loved with a deep and tender and passionate love, and Nature never did betray the heart that loved her. She filled his life with blessings, but her best gift was the love he bore her. Wordsworth was his Master; but the great classical passages of Nature-adoration from Byron and Matthew Arnold were also day by day upon his lips. The "Presence . . . whose dwelling is the light of setting suns," the "Heaven" which "lies about us in our infancy," "the light which never was on sea or land," with all those magical lines from "Immortality," "Tintern Abbey," "The Excursion," "Childe Harold," and "Obermann," which, once heard, make melody in our hearts for ever, grew more real, more full of meaning and power, when they were half-spoken, half-chanted by his deep organ-voice. And one summer Sunday night, when our work was done, and we were walking home, after quoting, as he used to, not caring whether any one listened or not, some of these glorious lines, he said to me, "I am all my life trying to get at the Reality which lies behind the illusion of God's richer, nearer presence, the illusion which made Wordsworth what he was, and which turns all our thoughts, yours and mine, to poetry to-night."[2]

4. *In Fellowship with Christ.*

This is the last and best way of finding rest in retirement. This covers all other ways with worth. This brings them

[1] A. Whyte. [2] C. F. Aked.

together and binds them into one full blessing. Our Lord did not send the disciples into retirement; He went with them. He did not say "Go ye apart." He said "Come ye apart."

¶ A person who had long practised many austerities, without finding any comfort or change of heart, was once complaining of his state to a certain bishop. "Alas!" said he, "self-will and self-righteousness follow me everywhere. Only tell me where you think I shall learn to leave myself. Will it be by study, or prayer, or good works?" "I think," replied the bishop, "that the place where you lose self will be that where you find your Saviour."[1]

All in the April evening
  April airs were abroad;
The sheep with their little lambs
  Passed by me on the road.

The sheep with their little lambs
  Passed by me on the road:
All in an April evening
  I thought on the Lamb of God.[2]

V.

The Gains of Retirement.

1 *Knowledge of the Work we are Doing.*—By going apart for rest we shall gain a bird's-eye view of the field of life and duty. In the midst of life's moving affairs we see life fragmentarily and not entire. We note a text, but not a context. We see items, but we are blind to their relationships. We see facts, but we do not mark their far-reaching issue and destiny. We are often ill-informed as to the true size of a thing which looms large in the immediate moment. Things seen within narrow walls assume an appalling bulk. A lion in your back yard is one thing; with a continent to move in, it is quite another. There are many feverish and threatening crises which would dwindle into harmless proportions if only we saw them in calm detachment. There are some things which we can never see with true interpretation until we get away from them. There is nothing more hideous and confusing

[1] Evan H. Hopkins. [2] Katharine Tynan Hinkson.

than an oil painting when viewed at the distance of an inch. To see it we must get away from it.

2. *Knowledge of Ourselves.*—Well might the heathen poet say, "The maxim, 'Know thyself,' came down from heaven." In the light of Christianity we may say self-knowledge is the whole of religion. To know one's self is for the Christian to realise the two inseparable truths of human weakness and God's strength. It culminates in the experience of one who has learned to say: "When I am weak, then am I strong"; "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And for this self-knowledge seasons of retirement are an indispensable qualification. For in the world we live more or less a life that is not our true life. There is, at the present time, an element of competition even in spiritual things; men are, as it were, kept up to the mark by their proximity to others, by a desire not to be left behind in goodness or morality; and often we do not realise how artificial our standards are, how much our life was resting upon the opinion of others. The love of approbation which, though in itself a good, often becomes a false, motive in our lives.

3. *Knowledge of God.*—This is the true and the only real counterpart of the knowledge of self. It is the realising of God's strength made perfect in man's weakness which alone can save us from despair. Retirement is the great means of knowing God. For knowledge is born of intercourse and communion with its objects. He who would know his fellow-men must live among them. He who would draw closer the ties which bind him to his brother man, whether it be for business and commerce or for pleasure and society, loses no opportunity for being near to and mixing with his fellows. He who made man his study sought to learn His subject in the crowded market-place. And if we are to know God it must be by losing no opportunity for being *with* Him; with Him in those places where He has set His Name—in His Church, and His Sacrament, and His Word; above all, in *prayer*.

¶ When a man, by touching a button or turning a switch, causes an electric lamp, or a dozen or a hundred lamps, to flash into incandescence, it is plainly not from the switch or from the operator's finger that the light proceeds. By turning the switch

he merely makes the necessary contact between the wire that serves the lamp and the source of power or illumination. And to make the contact between the individual soul and the Divine source of all spiritual illumination is the purpose of a retreat, and in its degree of every sermon. Unless this contact is made and maintained, the soul will not be efficaciously enlightened.[1]

4. *New Strength for New Service.*—There is a nobler end for the Christian to realise than the leaving of the world for the sanctuary. It is the carrying of the sanctuary into the world. This is the great sacramental truth of the Christian life. "In the repose of a saintly spirit there is latent power" (John Caird, *Spiritual Rest*, p. 202). The presence by which you seemed in your retirement to be flooded, is the presence which shall go with you into the world. It is the ark of God which shall carry victory over the enemies, the real presence which transforms your very bodies into the temples of the living God, the light which will brighten and make clear your earthly path, the continual source of strength and nourishment, preparing you a table in the very midst of your enemies, a fountain of living water springing up within you to quench the battle thirst.[2]

¶ The Greek word (ἀνάπαυσις) translated "rest"—whose verb is employed in the text—means more than rest. It marks refreshment and recreation. It suggests that welcome and delightful change which, while it comes as a release from toil, makes it possible to labour afresh—refreshed. It is not mere repose, although this enters into the essence of the word, but refection; rest, not sought in and for itself, as Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* X. vi. 7, *οὐ δὴ τέλος ἡ ἀνάπαυσις*) shows, but rest, so that one may work the better.

¶ Such seasons of leisure, let it be observed, are not the object of life. They are given to those who have been working, and given to them that they may work again. "Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest *a while*." The thronging importunity of the multitude soon broke in upon their quiet, and called them to fresh exertions. And though we had no command from Christ, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," and no such words as "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest," yet the sight of the waiting fields all around might well break our repose. When we see sin and misery and sorrow, should we sit still—we who believe we have the healing word? Be sure that only those have a right

[1] H. Lucas. [2] Aubrey L. Moore.

to a season of rest, and only those truly enjoy it, who have done real work, and who mean to go to work again. This world is not for enjoyment, not even for self-culture in the highest things, but for taking our part in it as God's fellow-workers, and as the followers of His Son who went about doing good.[1]

¶ In former times, in the Highlands of our own country, the people regularly every summer left their homes in the valley, and went to live three or four months in the sheilings among the mountains. And during these three or four months they prepared, under the stimulus of the purer air and healthier and grander surroundings, enough cheese and butter to last them during the rest of the year, and to enable them to pay the rent of their holdings down in the valley. They enjoyed the freedom and novelty of this kind of life immensely; and looked forward to it every year with the greatest eagerness. This custom gave rise to the most beautiful and inspiring songs of the people, and made them healthier and happier than they would otherwise have been.[2]

¶ "I'd sooner ha' brewin' day and washin' day together than one o' these pleasurin' days. There's no work so tirin' as danglin' about an' starin' an' not rightly knowin' what you're goin' to do next; and keepin' your face i' smilin' order like a grocer o' market-day for fear people shouldna think you civil enough. An' you've nothing to show for't when it's done, if it isn't a yallow face wi' eatin' things as disagree."[3]

Sweet is the pleasure
  Itself cannot spoil!
Is not true leisure
  One with true toil?
That thou wouldst taste it,
  Still do thy best;
Use it, not waste it—
  Else 'tis no rest.

Sweet is the pleasure
  Itself cannot spoil!
Is not true leisure
  One with true toil?
'Tis loving and serving
  The highest and best:
'Tis onwards, unswerving!—
  And that is true rest.[4]

[1] John Ker.
[2] Hugh Macmillan.
[3] Mrs. Poyser, in *Adam Bede*, i. 437.
[4] John Sullivan Dwight.

Admiration or Adoration.

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ADMIRATION OR ADORATION.

And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. —vii. 37.

ST. MATTHEW tells us in general terms that, when the Lord returned from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee, "great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed in their hands, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them." But of this multitude of cures St. Mark selects one to relate in detail, doubtless because it was signalised by peculiar circumstances. It was that of a man deaf and having an impediment in his speech; one not altogether dumb, if we are to take the original word as our authority, but probably incapable of making articulate or intelligible sounds. This deaf-mute, labouring under mere physical incapacity, his friends now bring to the Great Physician, and "beseech him," as the Evangelist tells us, "to put his hand upon him." But it is not exactly in the way they had imagined that Jesus wills to heal him. He first took the man He would heal aside from the multitude, as, in a case recorded in the very next chapter of St. Mark, He took a blind man He was about to restore to sight by the hand and led him out of the village.

1. Now for what reason are we to imagine that our Saviour thus isolated this case? Not for the avoidance of publicity, for then He ought to have done the same alike in all. Was it that He might pray over him with greater freedom? But surely He whose whole life was one unintermitted prayer, needed not solitude for this? And we know that before performing the greatest of all His mighty works, the Saviour lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed to His Father, in the presence not only of

the sorrowing family of Lazarus, but of all the numerous Jews who had come out to Bethany to testify to their sympathy. Perhaps His purpose in secluding from the multitude some of the recipients of His omnipotent benevolence, was to make a more deep and lasting impression on their minds than could be made amidst the din and interruptions of a crowd; even as the same Lord does now often lead a soul apart when He would speak with it and heal it of its spiritual plague, setting it in the solitude of a sick chamber, or in the loneliness of a bruised and deserted spirit, or taking away from it all earthly companions and friends.

Having thus prepared the man's spirit to receive the full benefit of what was to be done to his body, Christ put His fingers into his ears and spit and touched his tongue, and saith unto him, *Ephphatha, i.e.* be opened. No sooner was the "Ephphatha" pronounced than the man's ears were straightway opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. Not only were the *powers* of hearing and speaking restored, but the full *use* of those powers seems to have been instantaneously conferred. Well might the people say "He hath done all things well."

2. Though we are not to suppose that the spectators of this compound miracle were as fully able to appreciate the whole mastery of Nature it exhibited, as we who better understand the mutual relation between deafness and dumbness than the simple peasants of Galilee could do, yet this does not detract from the value of the testimony thus articulately rendered to the double nature of this miracle; indeed, the very circumstance that they could not know as we know that the dumb could not have been made to speak had not the deaf *first* been made to hear, makes their separate testimony to both parts of the cure all the more valuable, because it proves that it proceeded not from theorising as to what Jesus *must* have done, but from simple eye- and ear-witness of what He actually *did*. Whether they drew any further inference as to the character of Him who had wrought this strange and complex cure, we are not told; yet from the silence of the Evangelist as to any deeper feeling than one of astonishment, we may probably conclude that no deeper feeling, no further conviction was excited. The real dignity of Jesus

dawned but slowly on His contemporaries. Repeated miracles were requisite to gain any hearing whatever for the claims of the Nazarene; and after all His miracles, except the last and most stupendous, there was always a residue of doubt which vented itself in the desire to see some sign of their own choosing, different from any which He had vouchsafed. When astonishment was really produced, we may be sure it was not without good grounds; and even astonishment did not invariably lead to faith. It was from unbelief, not from credulity, that the contemporaries of our Saviour erred.

The subject may be divided into two parts—(1) From Wonder to Adoration; (2) Adoration.

I.

From Wonder to Adoration.

Four classes of men have to be considered.

1. *Some men saw nothing in Jesus to wonder at.* Did He cast out demons? They had an explanation: He cast them out with the help of the prince of the demons. Did He raise the dead? They had their answer ready: "It is expedient for us that one man die." The Pharisees and Sadducees did not wonder, because they were too much occupied with themselves. They were too much occupied with their own honour. Jesus did not bow to them and call them Rabbi; He openly rebuked their vanity and their selfishness. Wonder is the first step in the path of knowledge. They did not take that step, because they reckoned that they knew everything already.

There are those still who do not wonder—who do not wonder even at Jesus. And the reason is still the same: they are occupied with themselves.

¶ One of the distinguishing marks of human nature is the sense of wonder. The animal creation seems to have it not. Beasts of the field and birds of the air may be surprised or terrified at the unexpected, but the faculty of wonder seems to be left out of their constitution. For wonder is not mere

astonishment at the marvellous, nor surprise at the new; it goes on to ask, How and Why? It is aptly expressed by the old childish rhyme, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are!" That is wonder rising into curiosity as to how this astonishing thing came to be, how it works, and what caused it, what force controls it, the source and secret of its origin. The great philosophical and much debated idea of Causation begins in wonder. Wonder is man's first step in quest of the unknown, and all the marvellous things of creation, whether of power or of beauty, have their primary office in stimulating the human soul to wonder. Without wonder there would be no inquisitive mind, no eager, breathless desire to search out the secrets of the hidden, or discover the reasons of things. No animal looking up at the stars, if indeed it sees them at all, ever exclaims, "How I wonder what you are!" No lower creature gazing at a "flower in the crannied wall," says wistfully with the poet, "Little flower, if I could understand what you are!" But this is one of man's prerogatives; he must find answers to the questions started by the sense of Wonder.[1]

¶ The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mécanique Céleste* and *Hegel's Philosophy* and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results, in his single head,—is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye.[2]

2. *Some wondered at Christ without admiring Him.* This was the way with His own citizens. When He came into His own country and taught in the synagogue, "many hearing him were astonished," but they did not approve. "Is not this the carpenter?" they said. "And they were offended in him." When they saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him.

¶ Have you ever considered what a great teacher the sense of wonder is to children? If you get anybody's wonder excited, you can teach him anything. But wonder is most natural to the young. What freshness, what eagerness, what expectation, what hope we have in childhood! We have not seen everything yet. Like Charity, we believe all things; we are on the outlook for surprises. We are ready to know more. The best things do not yet lie behind us. We have not yet settled into the belief, which makes middle life so often a dead, monotonous level, that nothing more is to be seen. We have not shut ourselves to the

[1] J. Wood.

[2] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. chap. x.

persuasion, which turns advancing age so often into a timorous, cramped, grudging thing, that nothing better is to be known.[1]

¶ When wonder first appears it inspires the effort to *know*; later on this leads up to *admire*. No doubt there are various kinds of admiration in the world, but that of which I am thinking is born of wonder in the presence of beauty, charmed by it, delighting in it, and solemnised by it, filled with a sense of joy and satisfaction. Wordsworth tells us that we partly live by admiration. He who has ceased to admire, the heart of a man has ceased to beat within him. Now admiration is stirred in us chiefly by the beauty of things. Of course their utility wakens a kind of admiration, but this is a poor passion compared with the stirring of the heart by beauty. There is a chord in the human heart which responds to beauty, and never was this more susceptible of impression than to-day. The older poetical view of nature dwelt more on its utility and active force, its nourishing power, wealth, comfort, and prosperity. Since Wordsworth it is nature as a vision, a sight, a picture, a symbol of the unutterable, that the poets have looked for and opened our eyes to see.[2]

3. *Some admired but did not adore.* Perhaps this is all that these men of the Decapolis meant when they said, "He hath done all things well." "It may be no more," says Hort, "than a rather unmeaning kind of applause, such as might have been given almost as readily to a conjuror as to the Saviour of men." This was certainly the way with the Galileans who were fed with the loaves and fishes. They became intensely interested in Jesus, ran after Him, and lavishly Rabbi'd Him. But for what? "Ye seek me," He told them, "because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." They looked at what He did; they did not ask who He was. Here was a bright particular star before them, but they did not, like the child, say, "How I wonder what you are!"

The people of the Decapolis were really astonished; they were overcome with genuine admiration, but they did not surrender themselves to Him. They did not accept Him as Lord. For if they had, they would have obeyed Him. But when He charged them that they should tell no man about the miracle which He had just performed, "the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it." And it became a sore grief and serious embarrassment to Him. For He was not here on earth merely to heal a few sick and then

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 102. [2] J. Wood.

pass away, leaving the world with its diseases and its sorrows much as He found it. He was not among them only to shed a fleeting gleam of pity over their miseries, and then to withdraw and leave behind Him the darkness more visible by the lost light that had for one brief hour crossed it. He was here to found an everlasting kingdom that should hold stored in it the enduring vitality by which to war against disease and death so long as the world should last.

¶ We cannot measure the sorrow of the tragic loneliness in which He had stood amid the crowd which was so eager to praise Him, while their very praise was a witness how little they had the power to enter into His inner spirit or to understand what He purposed in His heart. Alone, quite alone, He nursed His great hope, though all the world might be praising Him for the things He did so well.[1]

4. *But some adored.* They faced the alternative. The alternative was that He cast out demons either by the help of the prince of the demons or else by the finger of God. Well, then, said some, by the finger of God; and they knew the Kingdom of God and its King were come nigh unto them. The alternative was that He is either a blasphemer or God. For it was true, as they said, that no one could forgive sins but God only. He claimed to forgive sins. And some accepted the conclusion: He is God. Or, again, the alternative was, He is God or He is not good. "Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is, God." And some accepted it. He is good; He is God.

Is it possible to pass from wonder through admiration to adoration? It is quite possible and quite common. The boundary, says Matheson, between spiritual death and spiritual life is admiration. Between seeing the beauty without desiring it and seeing the beauty *with* desire there seems but a thin line, but it is the line of infinitude; it is the difference between the almost and the altogether. Admiration of Christ's beauty is the lowest step of the ladder, but it *is* a step. It may exist where the deeds of life are not yet in harmony with its ideal, but it is the prophecy of the future perfection, the pledge of good things to come.[2]

[1] Canon Scott Holland.

[2] *Moments on the Mount*, 171.

Even Liddon, who is emphatic on the difference between admiration and adoration, says, "Certainly admiration may lead up to adoration; but then real admiration dies away when its object is seen to be entitled to something higher than and distinct from it. Admiration ceases when it has perceived that its Object altogether transcends any standard of excellence or beauty with which man can compare Him. Admiration may be the ladder by which we mount to adoration; but it is useless, or rather it is an impertinence, when adoration has been reached. Every man of intelligence and modesty meets in life with many objects which call for his free and sincere admiration, and he himself gains both morally and intellectually by answering to such a call. But while the objects of human admiration are as various as the minds and tastes of men,

'Denique non omnes eadem mirantur amantque,'

One Only Being can be rightfully adored. To 'admire' God would involve an irreverence equal only to the impiety of adoring a fellow-creature."[1]

¶ While working at my house on Aniwa, I required some nails and tools. Lifting a piece of planed wood, I pencilled a few words on it, and requested our old chief to carry it to Mrs. Paton, and she would send what I wanted. In blank wonder he innocently stared at me, and said, "But what do you want?" I replied, "The wood will tell her." He looked rather angry, thinking that I befooled him, and retorted, "Who ever heard of wood speaking?" By hard pleading I succeeded in persuading him to go. He was amazed to see her looking at the wood, and then fetching the needed articles. He brought back the bit of wood and made signs for explanation. Chiefly in broken Tannese I read to him the words, and informed him that in the same way God spoke to us through His book.[2]

II.

Adoration.

Having reached Adoration, we can use the words of the people of the Decapolis and say, "He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, 362.

[2] J. G. Paton, *Autobiography*, 320.

1. There is *the universal perfection of the work*—"He hath done all things well." We do not know what the "all things" of these men comprehended, but we know that they express the nature of all Christ's acts of healing and of all His wonderful works of whatever kind, and His whole work for us men from the beginning to the present day. Hort thinks it likely that St. Mark saw in the saying of the multitude an unintended likeness to the language which the Book of Genesis (i. 31) uses about the finishing of the work of creation: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

2. There is next *the particular example or examples*—"He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

(1) First of all He *gives* us our hearing. It is Christ who enables any one of us to hear any of the common sounds that enter into our ears as we walk out on an August day like this. If you have heard the singing of the birds or the running of the stream, or the voices of children as you came to church, then recollect that it was Christ who caused you to hear them. He fills the earth and air with all melodies, and He gives to men the power of taking them in. By giving back hearing to this man who had lost it, He declared this; He said, I am the giver of hearing; the power comes from Me.[1]

(2) He *restores* us our hearing. This is the purpose of His coming. He comes for restoration. But not for bodily restoration chiefly. He gives us our hearing at the first that we may hear the word of God and live. As Browning has it, He gives us all our gifts—"such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole"—that He may go on and give us the best, the gift of life eternal.

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?

[1] F. D. Maurice.

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?[1]

¶ My little girl came to me the other day with the headless body of her doll. She came carrying it, and in her little hands some of the broken pieces. She had smashed its china head into insignificant fragments. With tears in her voice she said, "Mend it, Papa, mend it." What was I to do? Her large blue eyes, blue as the Italian sky, looked up at me trustingly and expectantly. She would not understand if I told her I was unable to mend it, for her faith in me was boundless. What was I to do? I could make her forget her distress; and in a moment the broken doll fell from her hands as she reached out for the new delight. The Divine Fatherhood never fails. He does not so cheat us into satisfied forgetfulness. He doeth all things well.[2]

3. There is *the spiritual result*—fulness of spirit and life. "We will now," says Tauler, "consider the seven gifts of the Spirit, given to man through this touch whereby the ears of his mind are opened. First is given unto him the spirit of fear, which has power to rid him of all self-will, and teaches him to flee from temptation, and at all times to shun unruly appetites and licence. Next is given to him the spirit of charity, which makes him sweet-tempered, kind-hearted, merciful, nor ready to pass a harsh judgment on any one's conduct, but full of tolerance. Thirdly, he receives the gift of knowledge, so that he understands the meaning of his inward experience, and thus learns to guide himself according to the blessed will of God. The fourth gift is Divine strength: through this gift such Divine might is imparted unto him that, with Paul, it becomes a small and easy matter to him to do or bear all things through God who strengtheneth him. The fifth is the gift of good counsel, which all those who follow become gentle and loving. Lastly come two great gifts, understanding and the wisdom of insight, which are so sublime and glorious that it is better to seek to experience them than to speak thereof. That our ears may thus be opened of a truth, that the Eternal Word may be heard in us, may God grant us!"[3]

[1] R. Browning, *Saul*. [2] H. T. Kerr. [3] *Life and Sermons*, 385.

Ah Lord, Lord, if my heart were right with Thine,
As Thine with mine, then should I rest resigned,
Awaiting knowledge with a quiet mind
Because of heavenly wisdom's anodyne.
Then would Thy Love be more to me than wine,
Then should I seek being sure at length to find,
Then should I trust to Thee all humankind.
Because Thy Love of them is more than mine.
Then should I stir up hope and comfort me
Remembering Thy Cradle and Thy Cross;
How Heaven to Thee without us had been loss,
How Heaven with us is Thy one only Heaven,
Heaven shared with us thro' all eternity,
With us long sought, long loved, and much forgiven.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

A World for a Life.

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A World for a Life.

For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life (RVm. soul)? For what should a man give in exchange for his life (RVm. soul)?—viii. 36, 37.

1. The text is often spoken of as if it stated a problem in profit and loss. But the point of it may be missed in that way. For a man may have some profit and suffer some loss, and balance the one against the other. Christ says it is all profit or all loss. It is in fact an exchange. We have a life and barter it for a world. It is a double exchange, or an attempt at it. First the life is given for the world—"What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" And then, when the bargain is seen to be a bad one, the attempt is made to barter the world for the life—"What should a man give in exchange for his life?"

We are not to understand these two verses, says James Vaughan,[1] as if they conveyed exactly the same truth. The thoughts are two—and perfectly distinct. The first—supposing a man to have his "soul," is, "What shall it profit him if, for any advantage whatsoever, he loses it?" And the other, supposing he has "lost" it, "How can he get it again?"

2. This does not raise the question, once much debated, whether it is possible to make the best of both worlds. In that question the two worlds are taken to mean the present and the future, and between these there is no opposition. If a man does not make the best of this world, by finding God in it and living for Him, he will not make the best of the world to come; nor will he make anything of it. In our text the question is between finding pleasure in this world apart from God, or finding God in this world and all our pleasure in Him.

[1] *Sermons*, iv. 1.

So we have first the World, next the Life, and then the double exchange between these two.

I.

The World.

What is the World? It is this world we live in. God made the world: did He not make it to be enjoyed and used by man? Undoubtedly He did. But not that the world should be enjoyed to the exclusion of the Maker of it. Suppose that you invite some one to your table. You furnish the table. But what would you think of the guest who occupied himself entirely with the table, eating and drinking without once lifting up his head to hold conversation with you? God made man chiefly for conversation and communion with Himself. And when a man prefers to occupy himself with the good things of this world, he is gaining the world and losing his own soul.

To gain the world is to gain (1) the riches of the world, as the rich young ruler (Mark x. 22), or as Demas; (2) the honours and fame of the world, as Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30), or as Herod (Acts xii. 21–23); (3) the sinful pleasures of the world (Heb. xi. 25; Prov. xxiii. 31); (4) the amusements and follies of the world (Eccles. xi. 9).[1]

¶ At Aix-la-Chapelle is the tomb of the great Emperor Charlemagne. He was buried in the central space beneath the dome; but the manner of his burial is one of the most impressive sermons ever preached. In the death-chamber beneath the floor he sat on a marble chair—the chair in which kings had been crowned—wrapped in his Imperial robes. A book of the Gospel lay open in his lap; and as he sat there, silent, cold, motionless, the finger of the dead man's hand pointed to the words of Jesus: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"[2]

I built me my own little world,
Not God—but my world was fair;
I perfumed it fragrant with blossoms,
I hedged it around with care.

[1] R. Brewin. [2] H. H. Griffiths.

And I said, "It is well; it is quarried
Strong now, as strong love dare plan;
A home for two hearts it is carven,
Built by the will of a man."

And I shouted and sang "Jubilate!"
The heart within me was light,
It heard not the brooding footstep
That bringeth the blinding night.

It saw not the cloud from the sun-set
A man might hold in his hand,
Yet it swam on nearer and blacker,
To darken my pleasant Land.

And a wind span out o' the East—
God has four—a sword his breath,
And he shook my portals and pillars
With a shaking that meaneth death.

God o' four winds! Thine east wind smote it;
My fair world trembled and fell:
Still I stood—at my feet in ashes
Lay the World I loved so well.[1]

II.

The Life.

What is the Life? The word *psyche*, here translated "life," and often translated "soul," is the equivalent of *nephesh* in Hebrew, the conscious life of feeling and desire. The New Testament distinguishes this life from merely physical animation on the one hand, and from the higher life of the *pneuma* on the other. Thus the life or soul (ψυχή) holds a mediating position between the body (σῶμα) and the spirit (πνεῦμα), and the word is used with a lower or a higher reference in different contexts. So says Swete, and gives examples of the lower reference (Matt. ii. 20, vi. 25; John x. 15 ff.; Rom. xi. 3; Phil. ii. 30), and of the higher (Matt. xi. 29; Mark xiv. 34; John xii. 27; Heb. vi. 19; 1 Pet. i. 22).

[1] Agnes H. Begbie, *The Rosebud Wall*, 21.

Life, says Menzies, stands here, not for one of several elements of the human person, as with Paul, but for the whole sentient life of the individual. Christ does not mean, says Stopford Brooke,[1] a personal, selfish thing inside of you which was in danger of hell-fire or punishment, and which had first to be saved from them, and then put into a comfortable position in heaven. But He did mean all those qualities and their harmonies which make up in a man, in a society or in a nation, a character like the character of God, our Father.

¶ What an incalculable depth of gratitude we owe to our authorized English translation of the Bible! But it has done us all the same a few wrongs; and among these not the least considerable is that often, even in the same passage, it has translated one word in the original at one time "soul" and at another time "life." The result is we have got into the habit of thinking that a man's soul is something mystical, something vague, something different from that actual, breathing, struggling human life which he knows so well. But it is not so. The soul is nothing else than the life, the sum of vital powers which we expend. To save your soul is nothing else than to preserve your life: to make the best of yourself; to lose your soul is nothing else than to defile, to spoil, to waste your vital powers, to make the worst of yourself. Of course, if this is to be true, you must remember that your soul is yourself and yours beyond the grave; and to save your soul is to make the best of yourself considered as an immortal being.[2]

¶ What is it to lose the soul? It is (1) to lose Christ and all spiritual enjoyments; (2) to lose heaven and all its joys for ever; (3) to lose all rest and peace to all eternity (Rev. xiv. 11); (4) to lose all hope of ever bettering our condition (Rev. ix. 6); (5) to lose the very world itself (Luke xvi. 23, 24).[3]

¶ Large numbers of men hardly seem to have a life to forfeit; they can hardly be said to live; their intellect has never felt the thrill which comes with a true intellectual awakening; their conscience has never discovered how august duty is; the infinite mystery and glory of the eternal Kingdom which environs every man has never been revealed to them; there are the germs and the possibilities in them of a very great life, but the germs have never been quickened, the possibilities are remote from realisation.[4]

¶ I remember some years ago being present at a meeting held

[1] *The Gospel of Joy*, 266.
[2] Bishop Gore.
[3] R. Brewin.
[4] R. W. Dale.

in honour of an old teacher who was passing into retirement. A large company had gathered together, among them men who had made their mark in public life. Several of these rose and spoke in the old man's praise. He was not a man of unusual attainments or of notable gifts, but he had evidently done these men, who were paying him honour, a service they had come long distances to acknowledge. As I listened to the words of generous eulogy I discerned what it was that drew them all to respectful gratitude. The words they quoted with deepest feeling were not his pregnant comments on men and things, not his wittiest jests, and not his wisest counsels. They were the words in which they had felt the trembling of a deep passion, all the deeper for a shy man's reticence, which believed that each of them had a spiritual nature to be created anew in the image of Christ. These men, busy in the keen struggle of life, one by one bowed down in reverence before the man whose years had been spent, and whose duty had been fulfilled, under a supreme sense of the value of the soul.[1]

III.

The Exchange.

The exchange is to give the man himself, all that makes him a man, for the things that are without. And when the discovery is made that the exchange is a bad one, it is the futile attempt to get back the man in exchange for the things. But it may be considered in respect of the physical life, the intellectual life, the moral and social life, and the spiritual life.

1. *The Physical Life.*—Does it profit a man if he gain the world and forfeit his physical life? Is the loss of bodily strength, physical vigour, nervous energy, and all the capacity for enjoyment which these things bring—is that loss sufficiently offset by the gain of a whole world? The other evening I counted over in my mind no fewer than thirteen men who within recent years had died under fifty-two years of age literally from the pressure of overwork. These were all highly successful men, not licentious nor drunkards, and not all of them were irreligious men. But in gaining their little world they had simply toiled and struggled for themselves, denied

[1] W. M. Clow.

themselves hours of relaxation and rest. Late and soon they were at the daily grind of getting without spending, and, physically depleted, they died, not only in the prime of manhood, but in the summit of success, when, humanly speaking, there was everything to live for. They had gained a world, and had forfeited the only life which could enjoy it. At their funerals, I doubt not, remarks were made on the mysterious Providence which had cut short their days in the meridian of their maturity. But, as a matter of fact, there was no mysterious Providence about it. The men had died by their own acts, by the surrender of the righteous claims of their physical life in the struggle to gain a world. Well, was it worth while? Does that bargain pay? Is money of so much matter to any man that he should make himself a suicide for that one end?[1]

¶ One summer afternoon a steamer crowded with passengers, many of them miners from California, was speeding along the Mississippi. Striking suddenly and strongly against the wreck of another vessel, which, unknown to the captain, lay near the surface of the water, her bow was stove in, and she began to fill rapidly. Her deck was a scene of wild confusion. Her boats were launched, but did not suffice to carry off one-fourth of the terrified passengers. The rest, divesting themselves of their garments, cast themselves into the river, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land." All except one. Some minutes after the last of them had quitted the vessel, another man appeared on her deck. Seizing a spar, he also leaped into the river, but, instead of floating, as the others had done, he sank instantly, as if he had been a stone. His body was afterwards recovered, and it was found that he had employed the quarter of an hour in which his fellow passengers had been striving to save their lives, in rifling the trunks of the miners. All round his waist their bags of gold were fastened. In one short quarter of an hour he had gained more gold than most men earn in their lifetime.[2]

2. *The Intellectual Life.*—You can see men dying, dying as trees sometimes die, not from the roots but from the top. It is a melancholy sight. Their intellect is dying year by year as they become richer. Fifteen years ago their intellectual interests were vigorous, varied, and active; now they are

[1] D. Sage Mackay. [2] A. C. Price.

narrow, monotonous, and languid; their whole strength has gone into the pursuit of wealth, and all their higher intellectual faculties are withering. I do not mean merely that very much of the book knowledge that they had when they left school or college has been lost—loss of that kind is almost inevitable, and no great harm comes of it. I remember hearing a very able man, who was a high wrangler (I am not sure whether he was not a senior), I remember hearing him say, "I should be very sorry if I remembered all the mathematics I knew when I took my degree." But men not only lose their book knowledge, they lose their very intellectual life. Through this passionate devotion to business some of the intellectual powers decay, and you can see them decaying, and that, I say, is a melancholy thing; they keep their eyesight, their hearing is as keen as ever; but their higher faculties are fast going; they are no longer able to feel the enchantment, the fascination, the wonder of the great creations of genius—Milton's majestic song, the meditative verse of Wordsworth, the sweet music of Shelley, the storm winds that sweep through the verse of Byron, the childlike charm of Charles Lamb, the political vision of Edmund Burke and the gorgeous pomp of his rhetoric—have lost all power to console, to charm, to animate them.[1]

¶ The late George Romanes, one who himself stood in the first rank of scientific knowledge, and who enjoyed a singularly large range of acquaintance among men of light, has put it on record in his posthumous thoughts about religion that he has found it in his own experience true,—and he passed the greater part of his life in unbelief, though, thank God, that unbelief passed into belief at the end—and in that of his friends, that wide knowledge does not make a man happy; for man is personal, he was made for God, "and unquiet is the heart of man until it rests in Thee."[2]

¶ Only the other day a well-known man told me that some years ago he had sent a copy of his first book, then just published, to a prominent master of finance, a man who, from nothing, had amassed a colossal fortune. Some time after, my friend met this man, who, in congratulating the author, remarked that "he should feel particularly flattered by the fact that he had read the book at all." "Why so?" inquired my

[1] R. W. Dale. [2] Bishop Gore.

friend. "Because," replied the millionaire, "it is the only book of any kind I have read in five years!"[1]

3. *The Moral and Social Life.*—The records of recent days, involving the downfall of so many men high up in public estimation, have revealed, as with flaming fingers, how possible it is in these days to secure reputation and wealth and influence at the expense of integrity and honour. In the fierce struggle for wealth men have deliberately trampled their principles, and in gaining a world they have forfeited their moral ideals.

And what is true of the moral life of the individual is not less true of the social life. There is the steady effort which the capitalists in England are now making for mastery; there is the effort which labour is making against the capitalists. It is not my business here to approve or to blame either section, but it is my business to say that if either side, during the strife, or after the victory, lose their soul—if they lose the sense of justice between man and man; if they forget that men, being God's children, are brothers one of another, knit together by love; if in victory, they are greedy of self-interest or cruel; if they do wrong to freedom, if they are not magnanimous, if they become incapable of forgiveness—there will be no true advantage to themselves in their success, and they will do harm to mankind.[2]

¶ There was one living who, scarcely in a figure, might be said to have the whole world. The Roman Emperor Tiberius was at that moment infinitely the most powerful of living men, the absolute, undisputed, deified ruler of all that was fairest and richest in the kingdoms of the earth. There was no control to his power, no limit to his wealth, no restraint upon his pleasures. And, to yield himself still more unreservedly to the boundless self-gratification of a voluptuous luxury, not long after this time he chose for himself a home on one of the loveliest spots on the earth's surface, under the shadow of the slumbering volcano, upon an enchanting islet in one of the most softly delicious climates of the world. What came of it all? He was, as Pliny calls him, "tristissimus ut constat hominum," confessedly the most gloomy of mankind. And there, from this home of his hidden infamies, from this island where on a scale so splendid he had tried the experiment of what happiness can

[1] D. Sage Mackay. [2] Stopford Brooke.

be achieved by pressing the world's most absolute authority, and the world's guiltiest indulgences, into the service of an exclusively selfish life, he wrote to his servile and corrupted Senate, "What to write to you, Conscript Fathers, or how to write, or what not to write, may all the gods and goddesses destroy me worse than I feel that they are daily destroying me, if I know." Rarely has there been vouchsafed to the world a more overwhelming proof that its richest gifts are but fairy gold that turns to dust and dross, and its most colossal edifices of personal splendour and greatness no more durable barrier against the encroachment of bitter misery than are the babe's sandheaps to stay the mighty march of the Atlantic tide.[1]

4. *The Spiritual Life.*—But it is of the diviner regions of life that our Lord was especially thinking. If the signs of failing health, of approaching death, are not hard to recognise in the physical, they are not harder to recognise in the spiritual, sphere. There is less reverence in worship, there is less care for it, there is less heart in it; Christ, the living Christ, is not so constantly present to the thought; there is less of exultation in Him; His glory is gradually becoming dim, and it seems to have descended from the heights, and to have taken its place with no splendours about it among common men. Faith in Christ is less vigorous and intense, and there is less concern that other men should have faith in Him. If a man who was an effective Sunday-school teacher at twenty is only a Bank Director or a Town Councillor at fifty, if he has no spiritual gift and can do no spiritual work, honourable and Christian as his present function is if fulfilled in a spirit of loyalty to Christ, he has suffered loss of life, loss of rank. If, however, with the public functions he still possesses and exercises the spiritual gift, and exercises it faithfully, then it is well with him, his life is fuller and richer than before.[2]

> A man must live; we justify
> Low shift and trick to treasure high
> A little note for a little gold
> To a whole senate bought and sold
> By that self-evident reply.

[1] Farrar, *Life of Christ*, i. 136.

[2] R. W. Dale.

But is it so? Pray tell me why
Life at such cost you have to buy?
In what religion were you told
A man must live?

There are times when a man must die.
Imagine, for a battle cry,
For soldiers, for soldiers with a sword to hold—
For soldiers with the flag unrolled—
This coward's whine, this liar's lie—
A man must live?

Faith and Doubt.

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FAITH AND DOUBT.

Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.—ix. 24.

THE text is a part of St. Mark's reference to the great problem which confronted our Lord when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. There are many aspects of the scene which call for interest and sympathy; the blight and bitterness of a father's heart over the limitations of human love; the epilepsy of a son; the paroxysms of this awful malady in the presence of them all; and the mental unbalancing which was worse than death.

We owe to this Gospel the fullest account of this pathetic incident. St. Mark alone gives us this part of the conversation between our Lord and the afflicted child's father. The poor man had brought his boy to the disciples, and found them unable to do anything with him. Now a torrent of appeal breaks from his lips as soon as the Lord gives him an opportunity of speaking. He dwells upon all the piteous details, with that fondness for repetition which sorrow knows so well.

In the background of the story is the Mount and the glory of the Transfiguration. It is true that the "mist is on the river," and the "sun is on the hill"; but the sun shines into the valley, and the mist goes. The Master comes down from the Mount, and the child is healed. Is it not the message of the Incarnation? Sin and sorrow are at the foot of the Mount; but though the light be in heaven, the Christ shall be born in Bethlehem. The glory of heaven must cast its light on the earth. As we come to the study of a passage such as this, we learn that darkness is not to shut out the light, but light is to

banish darkness. The end is to be not eternal night, but eternal light. Grace is to master sin, and our imperfect life is to know the joy of eternal perfection.

Hours there will come of soulless night,
When all that's holy, all that's bright,
Seems gone for aye:
When truth and love, and hope and peace,
All vanish into nothingness,
And fade away.

Fear not the cloud that veils the skies,
'Tis out of darkness light must rise,
As e'er of old:
The true, the good, the fair endure,
And thou, with eyes less dim, more pure,
Shalt them behold.[1]

The subject may be considered under two aspects—

I. The Suppliant's Attitude towards Christ.
II. Christ's Attitude towards the Suppliant.

I.

The Suppliant's Attitude towards Christ.

i. *His Distress.*

The case has been in the hands of the disciples, but they have failed to do anything effective, and so the hope that mercifully turns men from one failure to a new test, brings this woe to the Master Himself, if perchance He can do anything. We cannot tell how much hope this father had. Hope is hard to kill, but years of sorrow and disappointment are full of wear and tear, so far as the element of expectation is concerned, and though the *expectation* of hope may grow less and less, the *longing* of hope, which bids recourse to new expedients, always lingers where love is. There does not seem to be a great deal of expectancy on his part, but he is full of yearning for the recovery of his son. He is sure that he wants

[1] Frederick M. White.

the Christ to *try* to help his boy and him. "If thou *canst* do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

1. One thing is certain: the man knew what he wanted. And he wanted it very sorely. He felt his sense of utter helplessness. How often this poor father had looked at his boy in the grip of the fiend, and had wrung his hands in despair that he could do nothing for him. It was this sense of absolute impotence that urged him to seek Divine help. *If* only he could believe in the omnipotence of Jesus. How those words must have sounded in his ear, giving birth to the faith which was trembling in his heart. "If thou canst! Do not say that to Me. I can. And because I can, all things are possible for thee to receive." As soon as the consciousness of belief dawned upon the father, and the effort to exercise it was put forth, there sprang up the consciousness of its own imperfection. He would never have known that he did not believe unless he had tried to believe. "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The man's desire for the moment was not so much that his faith might be increased, as that his unbelief, which he recognises as the barrier to the healing of his child, might be removed. His words mean rather—"Help my child, though it is unbelief as much as faith that asks Thee to do it." It is the intense longing of a father's love that breaks forth in his distracted cry.

> Sweet cares for love or friend
> Which ever heavenward tend,
> Too deep and true and tender to have on earth their end.
>
> These in the soul do breed
> Thoughts which, at last, shall lead
> To some clear, firm assurance of a satisfying creed.[1]

2. If our faith is dim and variable, so was that of those who walked with Christ when He was on earth. "O ye of little faith," "O faithless generation," "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed," said our Lord. But to whom? To the self-complacent Scribes and Pharisees? To the thoughtless, ignorant crowd? No; He thus spoke to His disciples. His nearest of kin "believed not on him." The apostles "as yet believed not

[1] Lewis Morris, *Poems* (The Muses' Library), 114.

the Scriptures." It was not only the two on the road to Emmaus who were "slow to believe." We will hope, then, though our faith be almost nothing, that the light will grow. The perfect day will not be here, but it will be hereafter.

> For deep in many a brave, though bleeding heart,
> There lurks a yearning for the Healer's face—
> A yearning to be free from hint and guess,
> To take the blessings Christ is fain to give:
> To all who dare not with their conscience strive,
> To all who burn for this most dear success,
> Faith shall be born!

3. Many are the times in our own lives, in the lives of our friends, when we cannot tell scoffers or even ourselves where God is. Perhaps it is bodily pain or moral guilt that clouds our vision; or the sin and suffering everywhere visible ask us, "Where is now thy God?" At such times we make a great mistake if we look for comfort in ourselves; for this is just the quarter whence the mists and clouds spring which hide God from us. Nor should we too much blame ourselves, as if mourning after an absent God always indicated want of love in us; for a man may think more of God and be more anxious to serve Him while doubting His existence, and in the anguish of his soul crying for light, than while resting comfortably in a taken-for-granted creed and coldly serving Him. We know that even to Him whose meat it was to do God's will, and who loved His father as only He could, there came in His dying agony a moment of mysterious forsakenness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

¶ A conscientious, intelligent woman, who had been in deep distress for many weeks, at last said to the clergyman who visited her, "Peace with God I know nothing about, but I have done quarrelling with Him. I have resolved to submit to God and serve Him, and do all the good I can while I live, and then go to hell as I deserve." The clergyman smiled and quietly remarked, "You will find it hard to go to hell in *that* way." The poor woman soon found that her willing submission to God brought her lasting peace. She had found the true religion, which is to know Christ's will and to do it without stopping to bargain for the ready pay of joy and happiness.[1]

[1] E. J. Hardy.

ii. *His Faith.*

"I believe."

1. In this particular instance, as in all instances, a man's belief is of vastly greater significance than his unbelief; and, besides that, it is only by one's distinct possession of belief that one is ever able to get the *better* of unbelief. So that clearly it is the first of the two clauses rather than the second that makes prior claim to our thought and interest. It is to the moral and intellectual credit of the man in question that he was thoughtful enough to be able to state his case in a manner at once so simple and thorough.

¶ One of the outstanding characteristics of the present age is the extent to which believers doubt, and doubters believe. This strange blending of earnest faith and honest doubt is a great puzzle to some thinkers, and a source of painful anxiety to others. To those who love truth above everything, and believe in its final victory, it is a welcome sign of the times, inasmuch as it proves that men think on these problems; and the Christian faith is never in danger when men exercise their mind upon it. Such men will often find themselves among shadows, and some of their discoveries during the progress of their research will startle and even frighten them; but if they think on, and continue the quest, every step they advance will bring them nearer the clarified and revealing light which surrounds the Person and the presence of the Christ, and farther from the shadows where He is only dimly known.[1] We should not deprecate thoughtful doubt; we should say with Browning:

> Rather I prize the doubt
> Low kinds exist without,
> Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

2. What is Faith in its essence—this mysterious power which brought the man an answer to his prayer? Faith in its essence is the power by which we grasp the future, the unseen, the infinite, the eternal; and in its application it is a principle of knowledge, a principle of power, a principle of action. (1) It is a principle of knowledge. Revelation tells us what we can know of the invisible and eternal world, and faith makes

[1] H. E. Thomas.

the message her own. In this sense it is most true that we believe in order that we may know. (2) It is a principle of power. For faith not only apprehends the unseen, but enters into vital union with it, and so wields, according to its strength, the powers of the world to come. (3) It is a principle of action. Our temptation at present is to acquiesce in worldly motives for right-doing: to stop short of the clear confession, to ourselves and to others, that as citizens and workers we take our share in public business, we labour to fulfil our appointed task, because the love of Christ constraineth us. And yet no other motive has that permanence, that energy, that universality, which can support our efforts through failure, or make them independent of praise, or bring them into harmony with the countless activities of life.[1]

3. The weakness of new-born faith calls for the compassion of all who love the souls of men. In addition to their own weakness they are liable to special dangers, for at such times Satan is frequently very active. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and the Prince of Darkness labours to bring back those who have just escaped over the confines of his dominion. If souls are never tried afterwards, they are pretty sure to be assailed on their outset from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Bunyan very wisely placed the Slough of Despond at the very commencement of the spiritual journey. The cowardly fiend of hell assails the weak, because he would put an end to them before they get strong enough to do mischief to his kingdom. Like Pharaoh, he would destroy the little ones. He seeks, if possible, to beat out of them every hope, so that their trembling faith may utterly perish.

4. Let us remember that, whilst the cry of infant faith is heard, the stronger voice of stronger faith is more abundantly heard. Jesus Christ once for all laid down the law when He said to one of the suppliants at His feet, "According to your faith be it unto you." The measure of our belief is the measure of our blessing. The wider you open the door, the more angels will crowd into it, with their white wings and their calm faces. The bore of the pipe determines the amount of water that flows into

[1] B. F. Westcott.

the cistern. Every man gets, in the measure in which he desires. Though a tremulous hand may hold out a cup into which Jesus Christ will not refuse to pour the wine of the Kingdom, yet the tremulous hand will spill much of the blessing; and he that would have the full enjoyment of the mercies promised, and possible, must "ask in faith, nothing wavering." The sensitive paper, which records the hours of sunshine in a day, has great gaps upon its line of light answering to the times when clouds have obscured the sun; and the communication of blessings from God is intermittent, if there be intermittency of faith. If you desire an unbroken line of mercy, joy, and peace, keep up an unbroken continuity of trustful confidence.

iii. *His Doubt.*

"Help thou mine unbelief."

We have considered the man's faith. And now, when we come to consider his doubt, we find that it is not so desperate. At any rate, whatever it was, he took the right way with it.

1. *He made a frank confession of it.*—Doubts which loom large in the dark, sometimes assume far less alarming proportions when brought to the light. Faltering faith is better confessed than concealed.

¶ A great-minded and tender-hearted bishop, whose name is cherished by us all, said to a mother who was much distressed by the disposition of her son, a college student, to talk sceptically, "Let him ventilate his notions. Let him air his views. He is trying to find out what he believes, and he will not find out until he exposes his ideas to the full light of day." Another, equally wise, said in a similar instance: "It is a plain case of intellectual measles. This kind of scepticism is the rash. It is best to let it come out. Don't drive it in."[1]

2. *He went straight to the Master with his confession.*—How many knots would be untangled, how many vexed and vexing problems would be solved, by going to the very central source of authority! The rest that our Saviour promises to the labouring and heavy-laden is rest from perturbing thoughts, rest from tormenting uncertainties, rest from harassing doubts, as well as rest from weariness, and weakness, and wickedness. Faltering

[1] C. C. Albertson.

faith, in the case of this doubter, not only honours itself by candid confession, but points out the way of peace by the very nature of its expression. The confession is a prayer. The doubter who makes the confession of his doubts an advertisement, a mere cheap appeal to publicity, alienates himself, by that very act, from the spirit of the truth-seeker. It is as indelicate to expose one's doubts in the market-place as to display one's sorrows to the gaze of passers-by. Here is the golden rule for all such souls as this father, this half-believer: Tell your doubts to God; publish your faith to your fellow-man. There is no place where doubt so quickly vanishes, where weak faith so certainly grows strong, where lame faith leaps, and blind faith sees, as at the Master's feet, the throne of Grace. There is wisdom in the prayer, "Help thou mine unbelief."

¶ We do not say there are no others to help our unbelief. There are books and teachers and pastors and friends who help our unbelief. A Cambridge professor once declared that no student of his ever left the university without being permanently influenced by the study of Butler's *Analogy*. Walker's *Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation* has been useful in dissipating doubt and stimulating faith in many a student's life. When Phillips Brooks died, a great company of men rose up to call him blessed, to testify that when, in crises of their lives, they went to him, they found light and leading. If anywhere within your reach there is a man of firm faith, a man like Tennyson's friend who "fought his doubts and gathered strength," one who has faced the spectres of the mind and laid them, one whose faith is refreshing and contagious, and who knows how to prove that "the soul has reasons that Reason cannot know," go to that friend, that teacher, and say, "Help thou mine unbelief." Not to the doubter, to compare your doubts or to confirm them, lest you be like a sick man who seeks advice of fellow-patients in a hospital, but to the believer who has a well-reasoned creed and the capacity to vindicate it, to him go with the request, "Help thou mine unbelief." But the skill of all such men is feeble compared with His to whom, at this or any moment, we may appeal with the absolute certainty that He will speak to us the one word we most need to hear.

> O Thou! unseen by me, that like a child
> Tries in the night to find its mother's heart,
> And weeping, wanders only more apart,
> Not knowing in the darkness that she smiled—

Thou, all unseen, dost hear my tired cry,
As I, in darkness of a half belief,
Grope for Thy heart, in love and doubt and grief:
O Lord! speak soon to me—"Lo, here am I!"[1]

3. *He kept his mind in vital touch with the little that he was already assured of.*—All wholesome faith, whether religious or otherwise, is a growth, a process of vital expansion from below upward, and the maintenance of that growth is made possible only by a careful observance of the laws of growth. If you have a bud on your rose-bush that you want to blossom, the last device you would think of resorting to would be to detach the bud from the stalk and to toss it into the air. And yet that is precisely what hosts of young men and young women are doing who are not merely questioning,—which is perfectly proper,—but are nipping the fibre of connection that would unite what they do doubt with what they do not doubt; and so of course their doubts never become faith, cannot become faith. Buds of doubt do not blossom and become conviction when separated from the live stalk of assurance, any more than rose-buds become rose blossoms when cut from the living stalk of the bush. It makes very little difference how small a man's conviction is if only it is conviction, and if only he will stand to it and be true to it in his thought and in his life, and make that conviction the basis of his thinking, the support of his inquiring, and the law of his conduct.

¶ The heathen philosopher, Plato, said, "My son, many have ere now doubted of the existence of the gods, but no man ever passed from youth to age without at some time or other believing."[2]

¶ When Horace Bushnell was in college he lost his belief in God as God is usually understood. All that remained to him from his previous conviction was a belief in the abstract principle of right. That was not much of a God, but it was something, and that something he held to. Instead of entangling himself in the intricacies of the darkened realm of mystery in which he could so easily have become enslaved and submerged, and thus letting his splendid career of Christian faith and service be sacrificed, he simply held his ground inside the very small area of assurance remaining to him. Instead of dissipating his religious energies by roaming aimlessly in a world where nothing

[1] Margaret Deland.

[2] B. Jowett.

offered to him a basis of firm support, he kept simply and unswervingly to his confidence in the abstract principle of right, and not simply kept to it, but knelt down and prayed to it. "A dreary prayer," he said it was, but it was a prayer; it was the best he could do, and it was honest, and, as he afterwards told the students at Yale, the God that he had lost came back to him in his act of trying faithfully and sincerely to worship the small fraction of God that had survived to him.[1]

¶ Constrained at the darkest hour to confess humbly that without God's help I was helpless, I vowed a vow in the forest solitude that I would confess His aid before men. A silence as of death was round about me; it was midnight; I was weakened by illness, prostrated with fatigue, and worn with anxiety for my white and black companions, whose fate was a mystery. In this physical and mental distress I besought God to give me back my people. Nine hours later we were exulting with rapturous joy. In full view of all was the crimson flag with the crescent, and beneath its waving folds was the long-lost rear column.[2]

iv. *His Prayer.*

"I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

1. When we take the prayer in its entirety, it may seem to us *a brief and imperfect confession*, and a prayer which it were needless for us to use. Certainly the words recorded by St. Mark were the expression of a weak, rudimentary faith: a confession due to interested motives, followed by the petition of one struggling to attain just such a measure of belief as was the necessary condition of his request being granted. "Only he who really believes," it has been said, "guesses aught of the unbelief of his heart." He is no true believer who is not keenly alive to the weakness and unworthiness of his faith. No one who has any true faith can fail to realise how this continually requires enlarging and strengthening. We can never dispense with the prayer, "Help thou mine unbelief," until this life is ended, and faith is exchanged for the open vision of those who know even as they are known. The disciples themselves were rebuked on this very occasion for their unbelief. Later in the ministry they were constrained to address to their Master the petition, "Lord, add to our faith."[3]

[1] C. H. Parkhurst. [2] H. M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, i. 2. [3] T. H. Stokoe.

¶ "What God requires and looks at," says Bishop Hall, "is neither the arithmetic of our prayers—how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers—how eloquent they be; nor the geometry of our prayers—how long they be; nor the music of our prayers—how sweet our voice may be; nor the logic, nor the method, nor even the orthodoxy of our prayers. The one thing which prevails is ferventness and sincerity."

2. *The very appeal is a tribute to God.*—May we not say that there is a faith of the mind and a faith of the heart? One climbs to his creed by syllogisms, from premise to conclusion, and seems to know not only what he believes, but why he believes it. Another is averse to logic, and clings to God in trustfulness through the magnetism of love. He does not know why he believes; it is enough for him that the character of God finds a response and an affinity in the impulses of his own soul. He may not exactly believe in the God of other men, at least according to the portraiture given by other men, but he believes in God as he understands His portraiture in the Gospel, and he worships what he sees. From the view-point of other men he may be an unbeliever, but his soul clings to an ideal which he finds in the Book of God; and at least he can say: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." And he may take to himself the words of the apostle: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." It is something to know what is in your mind, but it is more to know what is in your heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life. The brain is the birthplace of ideas. The heart is the touchstone of impulse. The mind moulds creeds. The heart may have no spoken language, but it is a dynamo, and it throbs motive into life.

¶ A Society of Atheists at Venice sent an address to Victor Emmanuel congratulating him on the escape of his son and daughter from assassination. Forgetting that they were atheists, they thanked Divine Providence for the miraculous escape.

¶ It is told of Thistlewood, the Cato Street conspirator, that, after arguing against the existence of a God, the moment he was left alone he was heard to fling himself on his knees in his prison cell in a passion of entreaty, and that on the scaffold he poured out the agonised supplication, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"[1]

[1] **E. J. Hardy.**

II.

Christ's Attitude towards the Suppliant.

i. *The Sympathy of Christ.*

1. There are people so superior in their own estimation that it is impossible to approach them. They do not suffer fools gladly or suffer them at all. If we ask them a question they snap us up; they cannot tolerate our ignorance and stupidity. It is different with those who are really great. Their patience with our infirmities often surprises us. And the greatest of all, the perfect Man, was, and is, the most accessible. He suffered children to come unto Him when His followers would have driven them away. Any one might touch His garment, and He put His hand even on lepers. Few of us believe enough to tolerate doubt. How different was the Truth in this respect! The greater than Solomon who answered the hard questions of humanity was most patient to faithless, awkward, stupid interrogators. The Lord Jesus Christ did not insist upon a confession of His Divinity. Christ's first followers were far from possessing the full Christian belief. A centurion merely said that a word of His would heal, and the Lord commended the greatness of his faith. An alien woman asked to eat the crumbs of His mercy, and He answered, "O woman, great is thy faith." When one of His followers declared Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," he received the beatitude which may now be read in huge letters underneath the dome of St. Peter's.

¶ Chief Justice Coleridge once confessed that his mind was sorely perplexed on the question of inspiration. He was told that "most of the men who had difficulties on that subject were too wicked to be reasoned with." We may be sure that this answer was as little pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom the man who gave it was mistakenly zealous, as was the desire of the sons of Zebedee to call down fire from heaven against opponents. Believers should recognise those weak in faith as "men of like passions" with themselves, and give them credit for wishing to believe if they could do so, instead of, by their manner, conveying to them, while

using the endearing term "beloved brethren," the compliment which some Egyptian kings are said to have paid their people before asking for any special favour, "By the head of Pharaoh, ye are all swine." They should let them see that they appreciate the difficulties to faith which are felt only by those who try to realise to themselves the meaning of what they profess to believe. Very often unbelievers are in revolt, not against Christianity, but against a grim, repulsive perversion of it.[1]

2. What constitutes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever, since they both doubt and both believe? Are they not therefore in the same spiritual order? Think not so. The great fact, the determining fact, in the life of the believer is his belief; in the life of the unbeliever it is his doubt. The believer clings to his faith, and suspects his doubt. The unbeliever clings to his doubts and suspects his faith. The poor man of the text, the man with a sick child (and how we pity him, and pity the child!)—is he a believer or an unbeliever? Which does he put first, his faith or his unfaith? "Lord, I believe." That is the first thing in his mind. That counts most. The other thought is secondary. So he is a believer, but he is a doubting believer. His prayer is the prayer of a doubter, but he is a believing doubter. There is a world of difference between honest doubt and stupid or stubborn unbelief. Jesus dealt differently with the two, and so should we. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." And again, "Tarry one for another." Some are able to make more rapid progress in truth than others; let not such despise those who find it hard to take their first few steps in faith.

¶ You know how it is in school. There are always some bright, precocious scholars who leave the others far behind. You know the contempt with which the prize scholar sometimes looks upon the "trailer." You know the impatience of the teacher sometimes when a whole class is held back by one student who cannot get over a hard place or see through an intricate problem. I do not know that the best pedagogy would say to the teacher, "Tarry for the slow scholar," but many a slow scholar has caught up with his class because some teacher patiently tarried for him. You know what soldiers do on a long march. They tarry for the weak and the lame, except in the emergency of

[1] E. J. Hardy.

approaching battle. The strong and vigorous will bear the arms of the weak, and if one sinks down by the roadside, there is an ambulance for him, and, in the absence of an ambulance, officers have been known to dismount, and repeat the beautiful self-denial of the Samaritan who put a wounded man on his own beast and brought him to the inn. Look at the Master's treatment of this doubter. The man confesses his faith is faltering. Something is in the way of his belief. I have wondered if it may not have been that barrier to faith which all of us have stumbled over at times when approaching some great promise of God, that common reflection, "It is too good to be true." Whatever it was, it was no barrier to the love and power of Jesus, for, without delay, He granted the father's request, and spoke the word that released and relieved the afflicted child.[1]

ii. *The Power of Christ.*

1. The father of the boy comes to Christ as a doubter; he is sure of nothing but his own distress. "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Christ gives him back his doubts. He repeats the father's words, and places them in contrast with the spiritual facts which he had yet to learn: "*If thou canst!* For one who believes, all things are possible": *i.e.* it is for thee rather than for Me to decide whether this thing can be done; it can be, if thou believest.

It is the majestic power of Christ that draws the distracted father to lay hold of His omnipotence. His word is like the blow of steel upon flint; it strikes a little spark of faith which lights up the soul, and turns the smoky pillar of doubt into clear flame of confidence, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

¶ Bishop Westcott has said, "Faith is a principle of power." Yes, and Christ is the great Power which, as a magnet, draws all faith to Himself. It is to be in touch with Christ that gives faith power.

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume;
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear:

[1] C. C. Albertson.

The leper Naaman
Shows what God will and can;
God who worked there is working here;
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy brow,
God who worked then is working now.

2. Christ is our great argument. He is both the glory and the defence of Christianity. The case of John Stuart Mill may be taken as a typical one. That this calm, guarded, sceptical thinker should close a life of research by acknowledging the validity of the argument from design, extolling Christianity, attributing its main power to the doctrine of an incarnate God, admitting that Christ is really historical, praising and vindicating His character, and in so many words recommending Him to the worship of men, is certainly something to make the most inveterate unbeliever think and think again. And any man who is conversant with the chief writers of the time will perceive that John Stuart Mill is not solitary, but that, in spite of a materialistic drift, there is an under-current of the earnest, intensely ethical, philanthropic, and spiritual which is turning hearts more and more to Christ. The character of Christ was never so much or so widely appreciated as at the present day, nor has the difficulty of accounting for Him on purely natural principles ever pressed so heavily. In the history of Christ, the materialist is confronted with this question: Was this noble, self-denying, compassionate Holy One, who bore mankind on His heart, who on the Cross prayed for His murderers and resigned His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father—was He only a fleeting combination of atoms, and was all this sublime self-devotion a delusion? Is this life and death of Jesus a creation of human thought? Is that great picture of God manifest in the flesh, a God so loving that He comes into human nature to suffer and die and thus win men back to Himself, simply the projection of the human heart, an ideal which it forms for itself? Then what depths there must be in the heart that creates such an ideal and worships it! Is this the ideal that man forms? and is he himself only perishable matter?

¶ The history of Jesus is wholly unparalleled. It is so splendid, so wrapt in deepest mystery, so clear, so simple, and so deep, with roots through all the past, and throwing such light

over God and man. Is that history a human creation? This is the difficulty that unbelief has to meet. Objections raised against particular parts of the Bible and difficulties about inspiration do not affect this. Treat the Bible as you like, you can never throw the Divine out of it. You can never obliterate the marks of a great Divine purpose in it or remove the glory of its great miracle and proof—Jesus Christ. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." [1]

[1] J. Leckie.

The Little Children.

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THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.—x. 14.

1. IN this chapter our Lord touches, and by touching hallows, almost all the stages of human life. First, He defines and fences and dignifies matrimony. Then He passes naturally to the fruit of matrimony—little children—and lays His hands upon them. Next, He receives and guides and loves a young man who had great possessions. And the chapter closes with the highest duty and privilege of manhood,—a self-denying, consecrated life for God, leading on to the same life to be renewed beyond the grave and for ever. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

2. Five things—putting together St. Matthew's and St. Mark's and St. Luke's narrative—five things our Saviour did with "the little children" who were brought to Him. He shielded them under unkindness, and through rebuke brought them to Himself. Next He took them in His arms, an act of simple love, His humanity placing Himself in sympathy with love's beginnings. Then He laid His hands upon them, a solemn, appropriating act. Then He blessed them, an act of priesthood. Then He made them the text of a sermon, the germ of one great thought which admits again of a vast expansion.

3. No words of Scripture are more familiar to us than the words of this text, for they have their peculiar and special significance at every moment of our Christian lives. They are the keynote of the service by which we are initiated into the Christian brotherhood; they are the natural thought and con-

solation of those who lose children by death; they are no less the eternal gauge and standard of the spirit in which, at every age, the Kingdom of heaven is to be welcomed and received.

4. Where and when were they uttered? for the time and place of words often throw some light upon their meaning. They were spoken in Perea, as our Lord was on His way, for the last time, from Galilee to Jerusalem. He had closed His ministry in the province of Galilee, in which He had been brought up. He had looked for the last time on the hills He had so often climbed, the lake on which He had so often sailed, the synagogues and streets in which He had so often taught. He would see no more the friendly peasants and fishermen who had listened to Him gladly—at least with eyes of flesh. And He was going to Jerusalem, where the priests hated Him, and had set themselves to compass His death. At first He seems to have intended to take the straight road to Jerusalem, and to pass through Samaria. But when He found that the Samaritans of the border villages would not receive Him He crossed the fords of the Jordan, and travelled through Perea, on the farther, or eastern, side of the river. Now in Perea He found some of the very best people of that time; and some of the worst. For many of the Jews of this district were half heathenised by constant contact with the heathen who, in large numbers, were settled among them. And, naturally, those who remained true to the God and to the faith of Israel were all the more faithful and zealous because of the difficulties they had to encounter and the opposition they had to overcome. And there were many difficulties in their way: among others this. In Jerusalem was the place where they ought to worship; and the roads to Jerusalem were often closed against them. Sometimes, when the snows on the mountains melted, or great rains fell on the hills, the waters, the swellings, of Jordan rose so high, and ran so fast, that the fords became impassable; and they could not go up to the Temple to make atonement for their sins and seek the face of God. Sometimes there was war in the land; and whenever war broke out, among the first places to be seized were the roads, the passes on the hills, and the fords of the river. How keenly they felt thus being shut out from the worship of God, we learn from the Psalms; for most of the Psalms which

are full of longing for the courts of the Lord's house, for the altars on which even the swallows might build their nests, and for the city that was compact together, were written by poets who lived across the Jordan, in Perea; and no doubt these Psalms expressed the yearning of many hearts besides their own. It was in this district, then, where there were many good men and women who were devoted to the service of the Temple, and all the more devoted because they were often shut out from it, and because their neighbours were heathen or heathenised Jews, to whom the Temple and the God of the Temple were not dear; it was *here* that they brought children to Jesus, in order that He might touch them.

5. Who was it that brought the children to Jesus? Why, of course, it was their mothers; for, in describing this scene, St. Luke uses a word which means not only children, and little children, but *babes at the breast*, "nurslings." And who should bring *these* to Christ but the mothers who nursed them?

6. The disciples "rebuked" the women, and even laid their strong hands on the little ones who came running round Christ, *and pushed them back.* They seem, indeed, to have been quite unusually rude and rough in their bearing. For when we read that they "rebuked" the women, we are not to understand that they used dignified and polite language. What the word means is that they *chid*, that they *scolded* them, rating them for their forwardness and presumption in intruding themselves upon the Master's notice. And whereas we read that Jesus said to the angry disciples, "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not," what we ought to read is "*Let* the little children go—*let go them*—take your hands off them, and do not *hold them back*, do not *push them away*." So that from our Lord's own words we learn that the Apostles were pushing the women and children back and standing in their way, in order to prevent them from coming to Jesus.[1]

There are three things in the text—

I. An Encouragement—"Suffer the little children to come unto me."

II. A Reproof—"Forbid them not."

III. A Revelation—"Of such is the kingdom of God."

[1] Samuel Cox.

I.

An Encouragement.

The encouragement was to the mothers of the children, and so to the children themselves, though it was spoken to the disciples—"Suffer the little children to come unto me."

i. Jesus as the Friend of Little Children.

1. *Children in the Bible.*—The child element in it gives the Bible its claim upon the heart of the world. Who can measure the influence of that Bible story of the little babe born in the hut of a Hebrew slave in Egypt? We see the mother looking upon her child "exceeding beautiful," whilst her great grief chokes her, and she presses it to her heart—for the law is gone forth that the sons of the Hebrews be flung into the river. Then come the stealthy visits to the Nile by night. They fetch home the rushes and weave the ark for the child, and then creep forth to lay the little one upon the bank. Then comes the dawning of that happy day, and the princess and her maidens gather about the child, and it is rescued and adopted as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Such a story as that hangs imperishably in the chambers of imagery, and brings into the midst of us a new tenderness and a new love.

¶ It has been said by some that the sublimest sentence ever penned is that in the story of the Creation, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." But I think most of us feel that we come unutterably nearer to God, and know very much more of our Father, in reading the wonderful words, "God heard the voice of the lad."[1]

Think again how large a space the childhood of Jesus fills in the Bible. For thirty years there is but a single break in the silence concerning Him, but about the Holy Child what scenes of exquisite beauty cluster. We see the simple shepherds under that frosty night; we hear the music of the angels' song; we gather with the shepherds as they come in haste; we stand with them adoring the little Child wrapped in the swaddling clothes and laid in the manger. We love to linger at the

[1] M. G. Pearse

Temple steps as old Simeon takes from the wondering Mother the blessed Babe and sings his song of Israel's redemption. And we come again to Bethlehem led by the star, and with the wise men we kneel, and fain would lay at His feet the gifts of gold and myrrh and frankincense. And yet again we follow them along their way on that dread night when Joseph and Mary take the young Child and flee from Herod's soldiers. Of all the pictures that have become graven upon the heart of the world there is none so sacredly treasured as that of the Holy Child Jesus. Who can say how much it has enriched men through all the ages with gentleness and love? Who can say how it has guarded and ennobled childhood?

Again, in the ministry of the Lord, what a place He gave to the children! How much He finds in them to light up the love of God, and to reprove our pride and care! He sits on the Mount and preaches the great Sermon about the heavenly Father. He picks a flower from the field and holds it up. "Look at it. If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" He bids them listen to the birds, the chirping sparrow and croaking raven. "Think of them," saith He; "your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?" Then comes the third illustration, and that applies the lesson. The break of the chapter shuts off the third part cruelly. Look at the Lord Jesus amidst the crowd. He has told of the flowers and the birds, and now, He to whom the children ever went at once, stretches out His hand and draws to Himself a little wondering lad, and He applies the lesson. "What man of you, if his little son ask bread, will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent, if he ask an egg will he give him a scorpion? Therefore, if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"[1]

¶ A young father was wakened early one morning, while it was still dark, by his young son in the cradle at his side, asking for a drink. When his thirst was satisfied, and the father had lain down again, the little fellow asked if he might sing. But his singing became so lusty that an embargo had to be put upon

[1] M. G. Pearse.

the service of song, for the sake of the other sleepers. There was silence for a brief moment. Then it was broken again by the child's voice. "Father." "Yes, little lad." "Is your face turned this way?" And, with his heart strangely stirred and warmed, the father tenderly said, "Yes, laddie." And the night shined as the light for the boy because of his father's face.[1]

2. *The Affection of Jesus for the Little Ones.*—As to the fact of the deep affection—it shines on the face of this whole narrative. Whatever may have been the precise motive of the disciples in rebuking the parents who brought their children to Jesus, it is out of the question to suppose that they were characterised by any positive or peculiar indifference to the little children. No; but Jesus was characterised by a very peculiar, gloriously affectionate, concern for them and their welfare. Mark the deep contrast here between the Master and even His truest disciples. See His positive displeasure, pain of soul (the original word is a very strong one), at their unkind rebuke. See how He hastens to assure the parents that His followers had miserably misread, misinterpreted, the mind of their Master. See His emphatic and impassioned welcome to the children in the injunction He lays on the disciples, "Suffer them to come unto me; forbid them not." See how He takes them up in His arms, frowns on the disciples, smiles on the children, places His hands gently and lovingly upon them, and blesses them. And this is not the only place where we find Jesus taking up little children in His arms. In the previous chapter we read, "He took a child and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me." Again and again we find Him speaking of *the little ones*—"It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." And near the close of the Gospel history we read the following words: "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple and saying, Hosannah to the son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read"—

[1] S. D. Gordon.

behold how He welcomes the children's songs!—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise."

¶ I remember long ago being very much pleased to read of the French general who was sent to fight along with the English against the Russians in the time of the Crimean War—General St. Arnaud. When he landed at the Crimea, he lifted up the first pebble on which his foot trod, and plucked the first flower on which his eye lighted, and sent them to his only child, a daughter living far away. He was very ill when he landed; indeed, he died soon afterwards—and at that time he had a great deal to think of, and yet you see there was room in his heart for thoughts of his daughter, and he showed in this striking way his love for her.[1]

¶ There is a significant story of the great sculptor, Dannecker, that, when he was working at his statue of Christ, he took a little girl into his studio, and placing her before the figure asked her what she thought of it. For a moment the little one hesitated, and then replied, "He was a great Man." The sculptor was disappointed: that was not the ideal he had set before himself. But again he went bravely to work, toning down this line, throwing more expression into this feature, until at length it seemed to him that he had succeeded. And so it proved. For when again the child was permitted to gaze upon the wonderful figure, there was no longer any hesitancy in her words as she exclaimed, "That was the Christ who said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me!'"[2]

When God with us was dwelling here,
  In little babes He took delight.
Such innocents as thou, my dear,
  Are ever precious in His sight.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.[3]

ii. The Invitation to come to Him.

1. *It was an invitation to their parents to bring them.*—If we take the total number of miracles in the Gospels, the individual details of which are given (and the number is not large), we notice that of these, four concern children: the son of the nobleman, the daughter of Jairus, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and the lad belonging to the unknown father. These children did not come; they were brought. They

[1] W. H. Gray. [2] G. Milligan. [3] George Wither.

were all indebted to parental intercession, and of these parents three were fathers, one a mother. For the good of the children in body and soul the father should always take the lead. If he does not the mother may—how often with wonderful success. The joy of joys is when both are united and resolved. How various were these people! One was a nobleman; but in suffering, noblemen cannot do without the Healer. Jairus was a man of education and station and means, with the additional advantage of being a leader in religious worship. The undescribed or unnamed father seems to have been poor, untaught, little heeded, possessing no influence; while the woman was a heathen, a castaway, spurned as a dog. But they all had love, and yearned for the welfare of a child; they all had faith, and each brought a child to Jesus.

On the present occasion He encouraged the parents to bring their children to Him whatever their bodily or spiritual state might be. He did not say to them, "Take these children hence." He did not say, "They can get no good from me until they are older." He did not say, "Bring them back to me when they can understand what I teach, and when they can express their assent to my teaching." He did not say, "Wait till they can believe before you ask me to bless them." The parents wanted a blessing, not an empty form, not a prayer, not a mere outward rite—they wanted a blessing, they wanted Christ to touch them, and in touching them, to give them something which was of use. And Christ responded to their wishes—He touched their children, He put His hands on them, He blessed them, and He said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." His words, surely, tell us that before the age of ripe understanding, before the child can tell his faith or his spiritual wants, God can do the child good; seeds of goodness, through God's power, through Christ's blessing, may be sown; and, in any case, Christ declares that children will have a place in the Kingdom of God, and, having a place, they have a name, and the outward emblem of the place and the name: He put His hands on them and blessed them.

¶ Parents of the coming generation, bring your children to Jesus! I speak not in the voice of the Churches, I speak not in the name of the Creeds, I speak not in the phrase of religious

revivalism. I speak in the interest of the schoolmaster, in the interest of education, in the interest of social development. The mothers of Galilee made a shrewd choice for their model. They came not with their children to Peter, or James, or John; they sought not to kindle them by Andrew, or Philip, or Nathanael. They went up to the highest—to Jesus. Ye mothers of England, be not less shrewd than they! Would you kindle the inspiration of your children? Beware of the torch to which you bring them. Do not say, "They are very small lives, and therefore a little will do it." Do not lead them to a wax match or a taper or a candle. Small lives need the greatest heat to fan them into flame. Seek for them nothing less than the sun—bear them into the presence of Jesus. They will learn all things from Him—the beauties of the field and the pity of the heart and the fervour of the mind. Cæsar will not teach them such courage; Socrates will not show them such calmness; David will not impress them with such chivalry; Moses will not inspire them with such meekness; Elijah will not imbue them with such earnestness; Daniel will not touch them with such manliness; Job will not nerve them with such patience; Paul will not fire them with such love. They will climb to the top of the mansion quicker than they will scale the ladder on a neighbouring wall; bring them first to the mountain; point them to Jesus.[1]

The baby has no skies
But mother's eyes;
Nor any God above,
But mother's love.
His angel sees the Father's face,
But he the mother's, full of grace;
And yet the heavenly kingdom is of such as this.[2]

2. *It was an invitation to the children to come.*—But what does "come to Jesus" mean? There is not a commoner expression on the lips of many good persons than to bid children "come to Jesus." Now, however correct and Scriptural the expression may be, it cannot mean in every point the same thing now as it did when Jesus Christ was on that day sitting in the house discoursing to the people, and when certain children were brought to Him. On that occasion the child, if he were not a mere infant, understood what it was to be brought to Jesus. He saw Jesus with his bodily eye as He sat amongst the crowd; he heard Jesus speak; he might mark the kindly

[1] George Matheson. [2] John B. Tabb.

light of His eye, and be encouraged by the kindly smile that played around His lips; and he might, in his trembling and fear, be soothed by the tones of the voice of Jesus. If there was any gladness at all—any pleasure, any interest—in the act of coming or being carried into the presence of Jesus, it was the pleasure and interest that a child derives from seeing a human face, from hearing a human voice, from being touched by human hands, and from being raised into the arms of a Man in whose embrace he found himself safe, and in whose presence he was not afraid. This is all changed now. Jesus is present as ever, but His presence is spiritual, and coming to Him is no longer a literal but a spiritual act.

¶ Coming to the Lord is not action, but mental attitude. The history is known to all, how some half a century ago a bright young girl, under pressure of the Divine Spirit, asked her pastor what she should do to be saved. "Why," he said, "come just as you are to the Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God." And his words seemed to her like an idle tale, for by materialistic teaching of the physical departure of Jesus, by the Ascension, her Lord was taken away from her, and she knew not where they had laid Him. But that night, in her own home, she knelt down, and there was God, where He always is, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." While she was musing, the fire kindled, and at last, under the constraining breath of the Holy Spirit, Charlotte Elliott wrote—

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

II.

A Reproof.

"When Jesus saw it, he was much displeased." It is a strong word that is used. This is the only time in the whole of the Gospel narrative that such a strong word is used of Him. "Much displeased"; the same Greek word is used in the Gospel narrative of the ten disciples when they heard that James and John had tried to secure the best places in the coming Kingdom, and there it is translated "moved with

indignation." We can therefore quite consistently translate our passage, "When Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation."

1. Why did He reprove the disciples so severely? There are several probable reasons—

(1) *Their conduct did wrong to the mothers.*—They rebuked the parents for doing a motherly act—for doing, in fact, that which Jesus loved them to do. They brought their children to Jesus out of respect for Him: they valued a blessing from His hands more than gold; they expected that the benediction of God would go with the touch of the great Prophet. They may have hoped that a touch of the hand of Jesus would make their children's lives bright and happy. Though there may have been a measure of weakness in the parents' thought, yet the Saviour could not judge hardly of that which arose out of reverence for His person. He was therefore much displeased to think that these good women, who meant Him honour, should be roughly repulsed.

(2) *They did wrong to the children.*—Sweet little ones! what had they done that they should be chided for coming to Jesus? They had not meant to intrude. They would have fallen at His feet in reverent love for the sweet-voiced teacher, who charmed not only men but children by His tender words. The little ones meant no ill, and why should they be blamed?

(3) *They did wrong to Himself.*—It might have made men think that Jesus was stiff, reserved, and self-exalted, like the Rabbis. If they had thought that He could not condescend to children they would have sadly slandered the repute of His great love. His heart was a great harbour, wherein many little ships might cast anchor. Jesus, the child-man, was never more at home than with children.

(4) *It was contrary to His teaching.*—For He went on to say, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Christ's teaching was not that there is something in us to fit us for the Kingdom; and that a certain number of years may make us capable of receiving grace. His teaching all went the other way, namely, that the less we are and the weaker we are, the better; for the less we have of self the more room there is for His Divine grace. Do you think to come to Jesus up the ladder of

knowledge? Come down, sir, you will meet Him at the foot. Do you think to reach Jesus up the steep hill of experience? Come down, dear climber; He stands in the plain. "Oh! but when I am old, I shall then be prepared for Christ." Stay where thou art, young man; Jesus meets thee at the door of life: you were never more fit to meet Him than just now. He asks nothing of you but that you will be nothing, and that He may be all in all to you. That is His Teaching: and to send back the child because it has not this or that is to fly in the teeth of the blessed doctrine of the grace of God.

(5) *It was quite contrary to Jesus Christ's practice.*—He made them see this; for "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." All His life long there is nothing in Him like rejection and refusing. He says truly, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." If He did cast out any because they were too young, the text would be falsified at once: but that can never be. He is the receiver of all who come to Him. It is written, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." All His life He might be drawn as a shepherd with a lamb in His bosom; never as a cruel shepherd setting his dogs upon the lambs and driving them and their mothers away.[1]

2. What reasons could the disciples have had for preventing the children coming to Jesus?

(1) *Concern for Jesus Himself.*—We do not want to think badly of such men as Peter and John, Thomas and Philip. And there is no reason why we should think they behaved very badly. They only made a mistake such as we all make sometimes. It was love, rising to zeal, for their Lord which led them to push back the children, though it was not a zeal according to knowledge. They thought He would not like being interrupted in the midst of a grave public discussion. And, besides, they were themselves very much interested in the discussion that was going on, and had begun to take part in it. They did not wish it to be broken off. They thought the women and children could very well wait. They were vexed and annoyed with them for coming forward at such an

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

inopportune moment. And so they pushed them back, and I dare say called out, "Keep back there! He can't attend to you now. Don't you see that He is busy?"

(2) *Doubt of the children's capacity to understand Jesus.*—They regarded the child perhaps from the point of view of its intellectual attainments, and reasoned that it was too young to distinguish between truth and falsehood, between system and system. Does not our Lord's answer favour this interpretation? For He at once showed that if it was not the mere innocence of the child that He was prepared to bless, neither was it the child's willingness to receive information and ask no further; but that it was upon that spirit of truthfulness, upon the desire to know truth for its own sake, that He conferred His blessing. And Jesus at once proceeded to show how that same quality which He blessed might be still alive, still unquenched by the world in the full-grown man. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

¶ I will say broadly that I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into this church than I have in the spiritual condition of the adults thus received. I will even go further than that, and say that I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the Gospel and a warmer love to Christ in the child-converts than in the man-converts. I will even astonish you still more by saying that I have sometimes met with a deeper spiritual experience in children of ten and twelve than I have in certain persons of fifty and sixty. It is an old proverb that some children are born with beards. Some boys are little men, and some girls are little old women. You cannot measure the lives of any of us by our ages. I knew a boy who, when he was fifteen, often heard old Christian people say, "The boy is sixty years old: he speaks with such insight into Divine truth." I believe that this youth at fifteen did know far more of the things of God, and of soul travail, than any around him, whatever their age might be.[1]

(3) *Forgetfulness of their value.*—The soul's price does not depend upon its years. "Oh, it is only a child!" "Children are a nuisance." "Children are always getting in the way." This talk is common. God forgive those who despise the little ones. A boy is more worth saving than a man. It is infinite

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy; for what good can they now do with the fag end of their lives? But these dear boys and girls—there is something to be made out of them. If they yield themselves now to Christ they may have a long, happy, and holy day before them in which they may serve God with all their hearts. If a famous schoolmaster was accustomed to take his hat off to his boys because he did not know whether one of them might not be Prime Minister, we may justly look with awe upon converted children, for we do not know how soon they may be among the angels, or how greatly their light may shine among men.

¶ The writer knew a splendid missionary woman in India, who, when only eight years of age, saw, as in a vision, multitudes of heathen children on a distant shore beckoning her to come and teach them of the true God. Another, who did good service in Africa, was, in her childhood, so desirous to help the cause, that she collected shavings from the carpenters' shops and sold them for kindlings to the neighbours, the money earned going into her missionary box.[1]

(4) *Ignorance of their need of Jesus.*—If any mother in that throng had said, "I must bring my child to the Master, for he is sore afflicted with a devil," neither Peter, nor James, nor John would have demurred for a moment, but would have assisted in bringing the possessed child to the Saviour. Or suppose another mother had said, "My child has a pining sickness upon it, it is wasted to skin and bone; permit me to bring my darling, that Jesus may lay His hands upon her"—the disciples would all have said: "Make way for this woman and her sorrowful burden." But these little ones with bright eyes, and prattling tongues, and leaping limbs, why should they come to Jesus? They forgot that in those children, with all their joy, their health, and their apparent innocence, there was a great and grievous need for the blessing of a Saviour's grace. If we indulge in the novel idea that our children do not need conversion, that children born of Christian parents are somewhat superior to others, and have good within them which only needs development, one great motive for our devout earnestness will be gone. Our children need the Spirit of God to give them

[1] H. S. Dyer.

new hearts and right spirits, or else they will go astray as other children do.[1]

¶ A mother was knitting under the porch of her house one autumn afternoon. Her boy was playing with other children on the village green. Beyond the green was the river, and on the opposite bank of it was a wood full of nuts and berries, and sweet-smelling leaves, and flowers, and many other things which children delight to gather. "Let us cross to the wood," said some of the bigger children. "I shall cross too," said the little boy whose mother was knitting at the door. The ford was a little to the right, and just out of his mother's view. There were stepping-stones all the way across. And the little nutting and berrying party got quite safely to the other side. But the clouds had been darkening over the sky since morning. And now it began to rain. First it came in heavy drops, then there was a peal of thunder, then came down torrents of rain. The bigger children hurried back to the ford, and one by one got over safely. The little boy whose mother was knitting under the porch was last. The river had by this time risen. The stepping-stones were beginning to be covered. The little man took one step, then a second, then he came to a stone over which the river was flowing swiftly, and his heart failed. He wrung his hands with fear, and cried with a piercing cry. The mother heard his cry, and flew to the ford. She was too late. She could not reach her child. A broad black flood of water came thundering down between her boy and her. "My child!" she cried. "Mother! mother! come for me," cried the boy. All the village came down to the riverside—men and women, young and old; but no one would venture to cross. They looked and pitied; they looked and wrung their hands, but they gave no help. At that moment a young shepherd, leading his flock down from the mountains, entered the village, and saw the peril of the child. He left his sheep on the green, and took great strides to the river brink. The roaring of the water over the stones was terrible, but he heeded not. He stepped boldly from stone to stone. In the centre the flood had carried some of them away: he plunged into the stream. With strong arms he beat the water to the right and left. He pressed his feet against the currents, and swam right over to the boy. With one arm he clasped the child, with the other he once more grappled with the flood. There was the roaring of the stream beneath, and the raging of the storm above; but the brave shepherd, partly walking and partly swimming, brought the boy to the bank,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

and delivered him to his mother. That was a boy who found a saviour. And what the brave young shepherd saved him from was death. But Christ was the real Saviour that day.[1]

3. How are children hindered from coming to Jesus still?

(1) *By force of Example and Conversation.*—The force of example, whether for good or bad, is very powerful, and especially is it so with parents upon their children and teachers upon their pupils. Peradventure, father, if you had been an earnest Christian your son would not have been ungodly; possibly, dear mother, if you had been decided for the Saviour the girls would have been Christians too. How few consider the extent to which the minds of young children are affected by the conversation they hear! Men talk lightly and falsely upon religious and moral subjects. They may mean no harm to the child; they may forget its presence, or ignore the fact that it is listening, and drinking in much that they say. Yet it is doing so; and, being unable to balance and weigh the truth for itself, their words have left a stamp of irreverence, of doubt, of sinful thoughts, and perhaps obliterated the lessons of purity and the fear of God learned at a mother's knee. They can hardly inflict a deadlier or more cruel injury than this.

¶ If there is one thing which, more than any other, is woven into every part of the texture of modern society, it is that which in mercantile and commercial transactions goes by the name of credit. Credit is merely a Latin equivalent for our good, homely English word "trust." Society is held together at every turn by trust—by mutual trust. Impair this mutual trust and confidence, and you get in commercial circles what is called a "panic." Destroy it, and society is brought to a standstill,—is disintegrated, and broken up. Now, where is the meaning of the word "trust" first learned? And where is the thing which corresponds to the word first practised? Evidently in the home. The baby drinks it in with its mother's milk. The growing child, by what seems to be a natural instinct rather than an acquired habit, trusts those whom he learns to call by the names "father" and "mother." It is an evil thing for the family, and an evil thing for society, when the child's confidence is shaken and he finds that father and mother are not always to be trusted. And this lesson of trust is not confined to the relation of parent and child only, but belongs equally, though in other forms, to every relation

[1] A. Macleod.

of domestic life. Husband and wife, for example, learn, as the years go on, to repose the most absolute trust in one another. In a word, the bonds of trust which bind society together are forged in the first instance in the home.[1]

¶ I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us; and then we sat round the table, and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of Alleyn's *Alarm*, or of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey.[2]

(2) *By want of Religious Education and Influence.*—Among the problems of the age none is more difficult than that involved in the question, "How shall the Church best succeed in reaching the masses of the people and bringing them to Christ?" Whatever else may be included in the solution of this problem, we shall come nearest to success when we have discovered how to lay hold of the children. The all-impelling motive by which the Church needs to be animated in its work among the young is supplied by the fact that the children belong to Christ. "Of such is the kingdom of God." Think what that truth implies. If these children—and not these only, but all children everywhere—are Christ's, the work of training their young souls for Him is not one to be performed just anyhow or anywhere or by any means. Our Master has laid upon us individually a heavy responsibility in regard to these His little ones. Some of them are the children of God-fearing parents; but are those parents doing all they can to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"? Some of them, we believe, already cherish in their hearts a love for the Saviour and a yearning after goodness which they themselves cannot express, and are almost too young to understand. What are we doing—are we doing anything—to develop that "soul of goodness" in them? Are we taking them by the hand to lead them to Jesus? Many of the children

[1] D. J. Vaughan. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

around us are already learning lessons of evil from their associations at home and in the street. Are we hasting to eradicate these noxious weeds and to replace them by the good seed of truth and virtue? If we would reclaim the world for Christ, we must begin with the young; and alike as a stimulus to duty and as an encouragement to our toil, we are reminded that the children belong to our Lord and Master. "Of such is the kingdom of God."

¶ A childhood without reverence, a childhood without any upward affection, a childhood to which nothing is mysterious, and therefore nothing sacred, a childhood with no heaven, with no encircling world about it save that of the men and women who minister to its wants; with a spiritual imagination wholly undeveloped; a childhood discontented, wearied, and without interest, satisfied with nothing, not even with self, though with no guide or hope towards improving that self—what picture so sad as the material crime that follows an unreligious youth.[1]

¶ We are told that once in the course of a conversation with Madame Campan, Napoleon remarked, "The old systems of instruction seem to be worth nothing; what is yet wanting in order that the people should be properly educated?" "Mothers," replied Madame Campan. The reply struck the Emperor. "Yes," he said, "here is a system of education in one word. Be it your care, then, to train up mothers who shall know how to educate their children." Have we not there a striking testimony to the power of home influence, to the degree in which those who watch over a child's earliest years mould and direct his after life? It is more than a genealogical notice, it is a testimony to character, when in the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel we read of such and such a king, "and his mother's name was so-and-so, and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." The memory of the prayers which he had learned by his mother's knee saved, so he himself tells us, a great American statesman from atheism. "The older I grow," says Thomas Carlyle, "and I am now upon the brink of eternity, the more comes back to me the first sentence of the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes, 'What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.'"[2]

¶ "Educate children without religion, and you make a race of clever devils."[3]

[1] Canon Ainger. [2] G. Milligan. [3] Wellington.

(3) *By neglect of their Place in Public Worship.*—Are the services of the sanctuary of such a character as to interest and benefit the young? So long as the children sit quietly in their places few members of our congregations are really conscious of their existence and presence in the sanctuary. This ought not to be. Every part of our worship should have its share for the young as well as for the old. Our psalmody should be so arranged that their fresh voices may bear a part in its melody. Our prayers should convey their needs to the throne of grace as well as the wants of their parents. And while it is manifest that there must necessarily be much in most sermons, perhaps something in every one, that may be beyond their present powers of comprehension, ministers should recollect that they are pastors of the lambs not less than of the sheep. The congregation which affects to despise the simpler words which the preacher now and again drops for the benefit of "these little ones," should take heed lest it despise that which is precious in the sight of God.

¶ In that pathetic scene in which Charles Dickens describes the death of Jo, you will remember how Jo, in answer to the question whether he ever knew a prayer, told how, different times, "there was gen'l'men come down Tom All-alone's a-prayin', but they all mostly sed as the t'other wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a-talkin' to theirselves, or a-passin' blame on the t'others, and not a-talkin' to us. *We* never know'd nothink. *I* never know'd what it wos all about." Poor little street arab, passing away into the dim unknown with no other knowledge of Christ's religion than that![1]

III.

A Revelation.

The revelation is of the nature of the Kingdom—"Of such is the kingdom of God."

Of whom? Of little children, or of those who are childlike? Some (as Baxter) take the words literally. They understand Christ to refer to the number of actual little children which are now in heaven. Those little children never wilfully resisted

[1] G. Milligan.

grace, or put the Saviour away from them. And their guilt, which they brought with them into this world, having been rolled back in the death of Jesus Christ, they, dying in infancy, went to glory. And when we remember the exceeding great number of the infants that die on the threshold of life, and therefore the very large proportion which they must make of the company of the saints, we can quite see that there may be truth in what Christ said, even to the very letter, if infants dying are infants still—"Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Whether our Lord did refer or not to the literal childhood which there may be in heaven, He certainly extends His assertion to those who, though not children, are like them.[1]

¶ Remember what Christ's words are: "*Of such* is the kingdom of God." What can the words mean if not that children and all who resemble them, all who possess the essential qualities of childhood, are members of that Kingdom? If I were to point to these roses, and say, "Of such as these is the floral kingdom composed," what would you think of the good sense of a man, however wise he looked, if he should go away and affirm that what I meant was, that all flowers *like roses* were in the floral kingdom, but that *roses themselves* were not? Or if I were speaking of angels, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," what sort of commentator would he be who should argue from my words that no angel was in that Kingdom, that they were all outside it? And when our Lord, speaking of children, says: "*Of such* is the kingdom of God," what can we think of those who argue from His words that children themselves are *not* in God's Kingdom? I will tell you what I think of them: I think they hold some dogma, or creed, not in harmony with the mind of Christ, and try therefore to wrest these gracious words from their plain meaning.[2]

What then are the qualities in children which made it possible for the Christ to say, "Of such is the kingdom of God"? As we seek for an interpretation of Christ's warning to His disciples, in some respects it is obvious that no one would wish grown-up men to be like children. There are Christian graces which they cannot exhibit, and depths of feeling which they cannot reach. The sorrows, indeed, of childhood are possibly sharper than we think while they last. The bruised finger or the broken toy brings a paroxysm of distress. But the young

[1] James Vaughan. [2] Samuel Cox.

child knows nothing of the sacredness of loss or mourning. It will play in the nursery though death has entered the house; and the rooted love of riper years is of far nobler growth than is possible in the earliest days of life. Again, children are often heedlessly exacting and imperious. It is reserved for men and women to show forbearance and self-sacrifice. Children also are sometimes unwittingly cruel and inconsiderate. Kindness to man and beast is one of the things which we seek to teach them, and they cannot be taught too soon. But in its fulness and depth it is a mature virtue. So are steadiness and endurance. We rebuke a man for the want of them in saying he is "as giddy as a child." Again, some children, who afterwards become thoroughly trustworthy, have not always seen the value of truth. In short, there are many childish imperfections and defects which we make no great count of because children have no power to put them into mischievous force. The law, indeed, takes wise cognisance of this, refusing to admit or acknowledge their possession of responsibility in some matters till the age of twenty-one has been reached. What, then, was it in the little children that made Jesus say, "Of such is the kingdom of God"?

1. Was it their *Weakness* and *Dependence*?—Every child is, and must be, very weak. It is its nature to be weak. It could not be a little child if it were not weak. So it is with every child of God. His weakness is an essential part of his being what he is. He could not be a child of God if he were not weak. What is weakness? Emptiness—for God to fill with Himself. What is weakness? Room where God may work and His grace expand. What is weakness? To be nothing, that God may be everything. We do not march into heaven; no one enters heaven so; we are to be borne in the arms and on the bosom of Jesus Christ. And we are undertaken for in everything; just as the father for his babe, so Christ for us: provision for all our wants, to feed our body and our soul, to pay all our debts, to carry out all our true wishes, to carry us, to train us, to perfect us, to make us quite happy in Him, and to glorify Himself in us.

2. Was it their *Trustfulness*?—The little child is charac-

terised by trust. We almost smile at a child's credulity. Why do we smile? Because we have learned too painfully that it does not do, in such a world as this, to trust any man as that little child trusts us; and to take him at his word as that little child is accepting us at our word. Alas that we should have to unlearn that holy art, that characteristic of childhood! Alas for a world which finds it necessary to coin such a word as that,—credulity! The greatest lesson we have to learn in life, the hardest thing we have to do, is to take God at His word. It will be an end of all unhappiness and of all sin, if we can just do that, take God at His word.

¶ A lady said to a little daughter of the missionary Judson, "Were you not afraid to journey so far over the ocean?" "Why, no, madam," returned the believing child; "father prayed for us!"[1]

¶ During a recent hard winter, a poor widow, with several helpless children, was reduced almost to her last crust of bread, when one of her little boys, who saw her distress and anxiety, said to her, "Please don't cry, mother; I will write a letter to Jesus to help us!" The woman was too much occupied with her troubles to notice his singular remark, and so, taking her silence for approval of his purpose, he sat down and scrawled on a bit of paper, torn from an old writing-book, these words: "Dear Saviour: my mother and my brothers and sisters have had no breakfast nor dinner to-day; please send us something to eat." He then signed his name, with the street and number, and, running to the post-office, dropped the letter into the box. When the letters were sorted, the clerk's attention was attracted by one directed, in a child's hand, "To Jesus Christ." In his perplexity, he showed it to the postmaster, and he, in turn, handed it to a good Christian man who came into the office for his mail. "I will take care of it!" said the gentleman.[2]

A tender child of summers three,
Seeking her little bed at night,
Paused on the dark stair timidly.
"Oh, mother! take my hand," said she,
"And then the dark will all be light."

We older children grope our way
From dark behind to dark before;
And only when our hands we lay,
Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day,
And there is darkness nevermore.

[1] J. N. Norton. [2] *Ibid.*

Reach downward to the sunless days,
Wherein our guides are blind as we,
And faith is small and hope delays;
Take Thou the hands of prayer we raise,
And let us feel the light of Thee![1]

3. Was it their *Candour*?—There is a notably direct expression of thought by children. It is true that their exercise of this candour may need to be checked. There are many things which we think, but which, for various reasons, we rightly abstain from saying. And yet a child might teach us to say nothing which we do not mean. The cynic may sneeringly remark that the use of language is to conceal our thoughts. It is, however, scarcely necessary to ask whether this does not suggest a radically un-Christian perversion of speech. How well it would be were people to be more straightforward in their words! Without their being rudely outspoken, what needless difficulties would be escaped, what misunderstandings would be avoided, from what mischievous perplexities would families and society be spared!

¶ We are sometimes afraid to say this, or do that, which, if said or done, would bring welcome and legitimate relief to ourselves and others. How often a man regrets that he had not the moral courage to take such and such a course, to have been a little more plain spoken! What mistakes and misapprehensions would have been avoided, what explanations would have been rendered unnecessary, if he had only said what he believed when the opportunity presented itself! How the air is sometimes cleared by the utterance of a thought which had been (so they afterwards fancy) in the mind of all, but which no one had had the courage to express in words! This direct, uncalculating simplicity of speech is just one of the things in which men may well learn of children.[2]

4. Was it their *Receptiveness*?—This seems to be implied in the further statement, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not *receive* the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." It is the habit of a child to receive, and he has no difficulty in receiving. He began his course instinctively; before he had developed powers of reflection and choice, he began taking in supplies. He needed to be taught

[1] Whittier. [2] H. Jones.

many things, but the art of receiving was born with him. It is different with some other simple exercises; for example, giving. To give is not at all so native to him as to take, and a mother will often exhibit what she regards as a little triumph of education when her child can be induced to part with something he has got on being asked for it.

5. Was it their *Humility*?—Children are naturally humble. It is only when they have been spoiled by foolish flattery and over-indulgence that they become proud. Naturally, they shun observation, and blush at compliments.

Lord, forever at Thy side
  Let my place and portion be;
Strip me of the robe of pride,
  Clothe me with humility.

Humble as a little child,
  Weaned from the mother's breast.
By no subtleties beguiled,
  On Thy faithful word I rest.

6. Was it their *Innocence*?—There is so much of evil that a child does not know, much indeed that it cannot know. As it grows older, a great deal of what it can and does know, by seeing it, may still remain unknown to its own personal experience. About this unconsciousness of evil there is something sacred. It seems more unearthly than anything else that we know. Even when ignorance is gone, yet innocent knowledge and guilty knowledge are so far apart that still there is a kind of heavenly presence round all those who have not yet sinned, in so far as they have not yet sinned. Of such is the Kingdom of heaven. This kind of purity, the purity which has been kept clean, not that which has been made clean, always seems to have a peculiar unearthly lustre. Repentance puts a man back sometimes, not merely where he was, but even higher. A man who has stained himself is sometimes so purified that his character seems more stainless than ever. And yet, though he may gain a greater degree of purity than ever, it is not the same kind of purity. There is nothing which quite matches perfect innocence. And the innocence of children is

more perfect than any other on earth. As we grow older we have to replace it by hearty and deep repentance, by coming to Christ for cleansing, by fleeing from temptation with the utmost earnestness, by prayer to Christ for strength. And we shall have what we ask. But nothing else can quite replace the simple attachment which binds the innocent heart to the loving Saviour, and the grown Christian clings with earnest longing to whatever fragment of childlike innocence still remains to him. And as he grows older there is no temptation which cuts him with deeper pain than one which solicits him to do a wrong thing which he never recollects having done before.

¶ I have read of an artist who painted a portrait of a child, beautiful and promising, and he was so pleased with it that he called it Innocence. Many years afterwards he was advised to paint a companion portrait, and to call it Guilt. To find a proper representative for this, he visited a prison in which there lay a man who was sentenced to death for a very brutal murder, and who had had a very bad record before that murder was committed. He received permission to go to the prison, and to paint the portrait of the criminal. What was his surprise to find that his representative of Guilt was the very person who, five and twenty years before, had sat to him as the representative of Innocence.[1]

¶ Once, when his infant son was brought to Luther, and he kissed it and folded it to his heart, he said, "My God, how dearly Adam must have loved Cain, the first-born human creature! And afterwards he became a fratricide. O Adam, woe, woe to thee!"[2]

7. Was it their *Obedience*?—A characteristic of the child is the instinct of obedience. It is natural and easy to a child to obey. And every wise father and every wise mother keeps the instinct always in exercise. To this natural readiness to obey does the mother appeal when her child is tempted by this trifle or by that. Often a message is sent, or a service is required, just when the little will was on the point of going wrong. To this same instinct the mother often has recourse when childish troubles fret the temper. Something to be done, something to be fetched, some message to a servant employs the thoughts, and the sorrow is forgotten. The child of course has other instincts, and very early the instinct of obedience comes in

[1] W. H. Gray.

[2] *Watchwords from Luther*, 239.

conflict with wishes, and caprices, and fancies, and temper, and begins to fade out of the character even more rapidly than the natural grace of innocence. But that same readiness of obedience, that same instinctive impulse to obey superior bidding, the man has to learn if he has not been able to keep. And blessed indeed is he who has kept it. The temptations, the conflicts, the falls, the sorrow, the mischief from which he is saved who has kept on from childhood the readiness to do what he is bid, and who, as other authorities are removed, transfers his hearty and quick submission to God's messenger within the soul, who shall number?

8. Was it their *Simplicity*?—One of the characteristics of the child is simplicity. There is not, there cannot well be, in a child any depth or persistency of worldly purpose. Rather a child is altogether purposeless. Affectation there may be in a child, but it cannot last. It comes and goes. Longing for some particular object there may be, but how easily it is diverted! The heart is readily reached. There is as yet no crust formed over it by selfish aims. There is as yet nothing to check natural generosity. There may be the germs of worldliness, but they are not yet come to their growth. The springs of the heart are still fresh. The impulses are still warm. The readiness to believe is still strong. This, too, passes away, unless it is kept by prayer and by personal communion with God. This, too, if it pass away, must be recovered, if a man is to be a servant of Christ. And this cannot be kept and cannot be recovered by conflict with ourselves. To keep innocence and to keep the instinct of obedience, demand chiefly the will. But to keep simplicity demands that kind of prayer which seems to make a man familiar with the very presence of God, which seems to keep him constantly in the outer court of heaven, which seems to give him unconsciously the language, the bearing, the countenance only to be got from heavenly thoughts.

¶ You must accustom yourself to seek Him with the simplicity of a child, with a tender familiarity and a confidence acceptable to so loving a Father.[1]

[1] Fénelon.

¶ In a grown man the direct and negative simplicity of a child is childishness; yet though he may not and cannot become a child, to become in some measure childlike, to make himself reflexly and positively what he was when Nature first gave him into his own hands, is the scope of all rightly directed moral endeavour. Normally, his first exercise of liberty is to shatter this simplicity to atoms; to go as far as may be from his infancy; to break up and explore the infinite possibilities of his nature. His subsequent task is to return homeward, to reconstruct freely, consciously, appreciatively, what he has shattered; to consent understandingly to God's designs in his regard. This is the law of all moral and spiritual life.[1]

9. Was it simply their *Attractiveness*?—The young do not know how deep an interest, how warm an affection, how keen a sympathy they always attract from those who are older. They do not know how strong is the desire which older people feel to make them happy, to win their affection, to guide them right. They do not know the pleasure which they give when they seem pleased, when they show affection, when they show nobleness, or truth, or unselfishness of character. When a man has grown to manhood there cannot be the same interest in him unless he is a personal friend. He is bound to see to himself. He cannot be helped in the same way. And God accordingly has not unlocked all hearts to him, as He has to those who are younger But the young are ever surrounded by those who long for their welfare, whose delight is to see them delighted, whose hope is to see their happiness resting on a sure foundation. Can there be any other time of life when it will be easier to let right feelings and warm-hearted simplicity rule the soul than while much of the childlike character still remains, and the tenderness of God is still reflected all around in the yearning good wishes of older friends?

10. Or was it, last of all, the *powers that lay hidden* in the child?—It was not only the winning beauty of the little children that held Jesus. He saw in them the pledges and most striking emblems of the great Empire of God. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." "Thou best Philosopher!" "Mighty Prophet!" "Seer blest!" says Wordsworth, in his

[1] Father Tyrrell.

"Intimations of Immortality." Lofty language to apply to a little child, and yet all and more is contained in the simple words, "Of such is the kingdom of God."

¶ Who is He in all the world who does most for us? Think of the great world with all its roar and traffic and eager crowd; think of all the interests that busy and concern men. There are the thinkers who think, and the artists who bless us with beauty, and the poets who sing. There are those who enrich us with the luxuries of life, and those who toil for its comfort and necessities. But who does most for us? He does most who brings to the heart a new accession of love—of love that subdues all the thought and aim of the life;—that uplifts its little common round into a thing purged of its selfishness and made beautiful by thought of others. If that be so, then let the world make room for the apostle of love—the little child.[1]

[1] M. G. Pearse.

One Thing Thou Lackest.

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ONE THING THOU LACKEST.

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.—x. 21.

CHRIST was leaving the Jordan valley, where for some time He had been, "as he was wont," teaching the people. Already He was on His way before the ruler could overcome his reluctance to seek His spiritual direction. Then the young man came running, late, but not too late, and kneeling, he asked, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" "Jesus looking upon him loved him." This statement, following on the declaration that he had kept from his youth all the commandments which Jesus had been quoting, sheds light on his character. He was real, both in his earnestness and in his stainless life. If, in this assertion of his obedience, there had been either insincerity or self-sufficiency, it would have aroused disgust. Instead, it awakened the Lord's profoundest sympathy. This was his burden; he had intended a full piety, and it had not brought him rest of soul. The words of Jesus, though stern, are of tender compassion and deep meaning. The young man felt that the secret of his heart was laid bare. "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying"—a shadow as of a lowering sky overspread his face—"and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions."

Three of the Evangelists have preserved the incident. Each one adds something to the completeness of the picture. The wealth of the inquirer is brought into view by all of them; but

St. Matthew alone tells us that he was young, and St. Luke alone speaks of him as a ruler, while St. Mark gives several most interesting particulars of the interview itself—the running and the kneeling, the earnestness and the reverence, the look which Christ gave him, and the love which Christ felt for him; and then again the look which Christ threw upon the disciples as He drew the moral, and the repeated expressions of astonishment with which they received His unexpected words as to the spiritual dangers of worldly wealth. All this variety, so picturesque and so natural, would be ill exchanged, we all feel, for a dry and sterile uniformity of narrative, taking out of it all the life and all the play, and suggesting the idea of an inspiration merely mechanical, out of which the human element would have departed, and with it (rightly understood) also the Divine.

I.

Christ's Look of Love.

"Jesus looking upon him loved him."

1. The word "looking" implies a *searching look.* It is used twice in the Fourth Gospel—once of the look of John the Baptist upon Jesus (i. 36) and once of the look of Jesus upon Peter when He called him to be a disciple (i. 42).

2. "Loved him."—There are few words more touching in all Scripture. They mark so decisively the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. He is not one that cannot sympathise—no, but in all things, He is "of like passions with us," only "without sin." The holy Saviour had a *loved* one among His disciples. He did not command, He did not exemplify, a dead level, a dull monotony, even of feeling, even of affection. There was for Him a friend among the friends—one chosen among the elect—one heart with which His heart beat yet more sensitively than with other hearts all loved.

¶ Many of the older expositors, from Victor of Antioch downward, wondered at this statement. It surprised them that our Saviour should be represented as *loving* one who was not prepared to give up all on earth for the sake of the Kingdom of

heaven. Hence various attempts were made to find in the expression something less inward than real love. Some supposed that the words *loved him* meant *kissed him.* Field[1] says, "Perhaps we might translate 'caressed him'"; and refers to John Lightfoot, who quotes examples of Jewish Doctors getting up and kissing their disciples when they were pleased with them.

3. Why did Jesus love him? Because He saw him as he was—pure, enthusiastic, unspoiled though unproved. It is a false and forlorn view to take of man, that there is nothing beautiful in him before he becomes saintly. The very attractiveness of an unregenerate soul makes us the more desirous for its regeneration. But often, as a cultured tree knows nothing of the husbandries which beautified the stock from which it sprang, and thus caused its beauty, so youths know nothing of the spiritual husbandries of past days, to which they are indebted for the moral attractiveness they have to others, and the moral strength which they themselves deem sufficient. It is often very evident that the children of Christians have by nature an advantage. Often they are more lovable than others. But they must not trust a "nature" in themselves that would never have been so lovely but for the "grace" that was in their parents. There is much in common, and even in perverted, men that has a rude native grace. There is yet more in the sons and daughters of the sincerely pious that has a natural hopeful bloom about it. God loves this, and so may we.

Do you suppose that the Blessed Lord now in heaven looks with equal love upon opposite characters amongst ourselves; say, upon the young man of pure life and clean heart and beautiful feeling, and the young man whose very soul is "a cage of unclean birds," whose tongue is profane, unchaste, or cruel, whose conduct towards his own is selfish, unmannerly, hard, ungrateful? Ought He, we ask it with reverence, ought He so to do? Ought Jesus Christ to confound all differences even amongst those who still "lack one thing"? Such teaching is as unscriptural as it is immoral. It would make us shut the Bible if we read it there. It would be an argument against Christianity which all the Evidences could not parry. It would be the indication of a looseness and a roughness and a

[1] *Notes on Translation of the New Testament*, 34.

coarseness of judgment which could not be attributed without impiety to the Judge of all men. Because we believe that there is a discriminating quality—and the Gospel calls it faith—visible already, in the case of each one, as present or absent, to the eye of God; shall we go on to say that without this or apart from this there is no essential difference between vice and virtue? Let "the Judge of all the earth do right," however it may fit in with our ideas or with our theologies. Be not rash in fixing the great gulf—wipe not out the "Jesus loved" in your zeal to hurry towards the "one thing thou lackest."[1]

It was not in vain that the young ruler kept the Commandments; it was because he kept them that Jesus loved him. It is not in vain that any man has lived bravely outside religion; it is because he has done so well that Jesus desires to have him for a disciple. No faithfulness of service in any province of life, and no ministry of charity, have passed unnoticed by Him who alone understands human nature, and who is our Judge. Our Lord has a welcome for all men who will come to Him, even the thief upon the cross; but of only one seeker in the Gospels is it written that Jesus loved him. He was not a reprobate, nor was he a Pharisee; he was a well living and high minded man. If he had been able to make the last sacrifice, then one dares to think the young ruler would have become a chief apostle, and the rival of St. Paul. When, therefore, one like the young ruler approaches Jesus, the Master sees a man after His own heart. When such a one refuses the cross which alone can raise him to his full manhood the Master is bitterly disappointed. And that man suffers the chief loss of life.

¶ It is a wholesome change in ethics from the modern hymns to the Old Testament Psalms; it is rising from the warm enervating plain of Italy to the cold bracing highlands of the Engadine. Not only have the Psalms an incomparable majesty which no hymn except the *Te Deum* rivals, and an unaffected tenderness which no hymn, except perhaps "Rock of Ages," has ever touched, but the Psalms have also an ethical tone which is wanting in many popular hymns. If the soldier of Christ wishes to brace himself for strenuous living, and the discharge of daily

[1] C. J. Vaughan.

duty, he can hardly find a hymn to make the blood move in his veins. He turns with satisfaction to Psalm i., where the doctrine and the practice correspond. The man who walketh in the law of the Lord, that man shall stand; the man who does not walk in the law of the Lord, believe what he may or say what he please, will be scattered like chaff before the wind of heaven.[1]

4. Was there anything in particular in this young man to elicit love? There were at least three things.

(1) *He had an eye for goodness in others.*—He knew real worth when he saw it. He was irresistibly attracted to Jesus. He ran towards Him, and with a gush of admiration exclaimed, "Good Master." It was not easy then to see that Jesus was good. It was not easy to say it. For if the Scribes and Pharisees were good, Jesus was far from good. His "Good Master" was courageous as well as discerning.

(2) *He understood the superiority of the ethical over the ritual or ceremonial.*—In other words, he understood the importance of the commandments of God as compared with the commandments of the Scribes. Notice the word "which?" in Matthew's Gospel. It was the lofty morality, not the low, that attracted him. He had kept the great commandments of the Law. He did not say he had kept the little commandments of the lawyers.

(3) *He was dissatisfied with himself.*—This was a remarkable feature also. He had striven from youth to live an honourable life, but he had not succeeded in realising his own ideal. Self-dissatisfaction is a true sign of moral ability. A self-dissatisfied man all can love. God loves him; Christ loves him; the Holy Spirit loves him; all wise saintly men love him.

¶ There are two classes of discontented people, those who are discontented with what they are, and those who are discontented with what they have. To the latter class very many belong, and of these the rich no less than the poor; for an insatiable desire for more, to mass wealth on wealth, to add land to land, to get more power and more position in the world, often possesses those who have of this world's goods. The young ruler was not of these but of the former class, who are dissatisfied with what they are.[2]

"Love, we go
To the Island of Forgetfulness, for lo!
The Islands of Dancing and of Victories
Are empty of all power."

[1] J. Watson. [2] J. B. M. Grimes.

"And which of these
Is the Island of Content?"
"None know," she said,
And on my bosom laid her weeping head.[1]

II.

One Thing Wanting.

"One thing thou lackest."

1. *One thing.*—Often have we said, of friend or neighbour, He has but one fault. Perfect in uprightness, in diligence, in devotion, he lacks temper, or he lacks courtesy, or he lacks charity. Perfect in kindness, in consideration, in humility, he lacks strength, or he lacks courage, or he lacks exertion. Sometimes we have to say a more serious thing. So faultless in one aspect, in one half of the man—so tender, so generous, so unselfish, so useful—he cannot quite be trusted when the question is of truth, or of sincerity, or of integrity, or of virtue. He has one fault, and it carries unsoundness into everything. We all know that there are vices which no number of virtues can counterbalance, in the judgment of the world, or in the judgment of the Christian.

¶ I have in my possession a watch, and by competent judges it is pronounced to be one of great excellence. Gold, chains, pivots, stones, are of the first order. Yet if it lacked *one thing*—the mainspring—it would be of no service to me, in the sense in which a watch is expected to serve, namely, recording the time of day. The mainspring is only "one thing," but that one thing is all-important to the value and usefulness of my watch.

¶ Some time ago the writer was travelling on the London and North-Western Railway from Birmingham to Euston. Among the passengers was a lady. On reaching Willesden *tickets* were demanded. By some means or other she had mislaid or lost that simple little article. She searched her pockets, satchel, purse, and everywhere she could think of, but it was of no avail. The "ticket" was lost. She had a number of cards, much larger, and more artistic and beautiful, than the simple little "ticket," yet they were of no use. It was the "one thing," in accordance with the London and North-Western Railway Company's arrangement,

[1] W. B. Yeats.

which was required, and no other card could be taken as an equivalent. It was only "one thing," but very important.[1]

¶ Many years ago an American whale ship was in the South Seas. A monster of the deep, getting wounded, ran out the distance of a mile by way of getting a run race, and returning, struck the ship with such tremendous force that she began to fill and to sink. The sea was like glass. The crew were not only far from land, but far from the track of ships, so that there was no probability of rescue until they could regain those latitudes through which the thoroughfare of nations runs. The mandate was given, all went busily to work, and the boats were quickly filled with the necessaries of life. The deck was nearly level with the water when the boats moved away for safety. When about one hundred yards away, two men jumped into the sea, went into the sinking ship, and disappeared down the hatchway. They were after "one thing," and, grasping it with a death grip, returned to the boats with it in their hands. They appeared to value it more than life. It was the compass. It was only "one thing," but vastly important, because their safety and life depended upon having it in their possession.[2]

2. This "one thing" is nothing less than the crucifying of the old man (which in the case of this youth existed in the form of attachment to riches), and so is equivalent to "all things," inasmuch as in the one thing all things are included. The entrance into this one thing is also the way to "perfection" (Matt. xix. 21), for this reason, that it can be effected only in the strength of God; and man can become perfect and good only in this way, that the one perfect and good God make his heart His temple.

¶ A poor drunken man once reeled up to old Bishop Wilberforce in St. James's Square, and said, "Bishop, how am I to be sure of getting to heaven?" The bishop looked at him, and said, "Don't you know that? My mother taught me that as I knelt at her knee in my childhood. My poor friend"—the poor wretched creature under the power of strong drink was reeling at his side —"my poor friend," said the bishop with that calm, quiet face that we remember so well, "turn to the right and go straight on."[3]

3. There are four stages in the development of our nature—animality, intellectuality, morality, spirituality. Most people will allow that morality stands above the first two, but many forget that there is something higher. Moses brought men to

[1] F. Andrews. [2] *Ibid.* [3] G. H. Wilkinson.

the level of morality, Jesus led them to the level where morality passes into religion. It was not His business to enforce the Ten Commandments, it was His to replace them by the principle of love.

¶ Much may be done to the tree by training, much to the man by teaching, but you cannot *learn* to do what you have not the heart to do. You cannot learn to manage, on any stream, a vessel that draws more water than the depth of the stream supplies.[1]

4. We are confronted with two opposite schools of doctrine, and hear the one saying, The man is worse than a profligate; and the other, The man is safe, and only wants perfecting. The one says, Better any immorality than the vice of self-righteousness. The other says, Morality is the *differentia* of human being; give me virtue, and for all else let bigots fight. The one says, No case so hopeless as that which has no need of repentance; which, not having consciously fallen, can dispense with a Saviour; saying I am rich, is deaf to the counsel, Buy of Me without price. The other says, The end of religion is virtue—reach virtue any way, and God cannot condemn. Against the former of these views is the "Jesus loved him": against the latter is the "went away sorrowful." It is better to be moral than to be profligate; yet to be moral is not salvation. We must not sever what the text has joined in one. "Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest."

¶ You will admit that the dahlia in gorgeousness of colour falls not a whit behind the choicest productions of the best cultured nursery. But it is minus one important thing—scent. If its scent were only equal to its beauty, its aroma to its colour, it might even enter into friendly competition with the rose, the acknowledged sovereign of the garden. Art has done its best to supply this deficiency of Nature—botanists have strained their skill to perfume this magnificent flower, but in vain. No fragrance can be imparted or developed. The dahlia is very beautiful, but not sweet. The perfection of a flower, however, consists in exquisiteness of colour and deliciousness of fragrance.[2]

[1] T. T. Lynch. [2] F. Andrews.

III.

Treasure surrendered on Earth is Treasure laid up in Heaven.

"Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

1. There are very few extraordinary openings of any kind in most men's lives; but there are sure to be at least a few very testing hours. And these hours often come just as the youth is turning man. He has professed, and has really felt, much admiration for noble things and noble persons. Education has directed his enthusiasm, and the world has not yet damped it. What lacks he? Courage, perhaps, to become a foremost advocate of an unpopular truth, which truth he has privately seen and honoured: or, perhaps, "hardness" enough to become *soldier* for anything. He has a silver tongue, but not a strong hand; he will be trumpeter on gala days, but must not be looked for among the slain, or the surviving, in decisive hours. Many have preached the Kingdom of heaven, saying, "It will come, it is at hand," who, when it has come, but with "garments rolled in blood," have fled, not tarrying to welcome it. How indeed could they welcome such a coming!

¶ I heard a clergyman tell this story of a Jewish maiden brought to Christ through his instrumentality. She lived with her mother, whose only daughter she was, in Germany. Her mother was a widow, and very well-to-do. At first she kept secret from her mother her acceptance of the Christian faith, from fear of the pain it would cause her. One evening she felt she could keep the secret no longer. She asked her mother to kiss her, which the mother did, wondering at the request. It was the last embrace between mother and daughter. For at midnight the clergyman and his wife were roused by the young girl, driven from her mother's house, penniless. Work was found for her to do; but, unfitted for battle with the hard world, she early succumbed. When her end was very near the clergyman, raising her head to put a glass of water to the parched lips, asked, "Are you happy?" Unhesitatingly came the answer, "So happy!"[1]

[1] J. B. M. Grimes.

Riches I hold in light esteem;
And love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream
That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is "Leave the heart that now I bear,
And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
'Tis all that I implore;
In life and death, a chainless soul
With courage to endure.[1]

2. Christ does not challenge the truth of what the young ruler has said; but bases on it an immeasurably higher demand, one to which he was not prepared to respond. What a contrast is here to the method most of us would have pursued—spiritual directors, evangelical pastors, helpers in the inquiry room. Almost certainly we should have challenged his assertion; should have set him judging himself by the law, pointing out its "exceeding breadth," especially in the light of its spirituality as interpreted by Christ. We should have said, "Were you never disobedient to your parents? never angry with any one without cause, or in excess of the occasion? never lustful, never covetous of anything belonging to another man, never untruthful, evasive, unfair in your judgment of your neighbour?" And we should perhaps have wound up with the words—"Whosoever offends in one point is guilty of all." This is what we should have called "searching the young man's conscience"; and it would have revealed ignorance of the fact that, in Christ's world, the conscience is searched, not by the law, but by His Spirit. The self-dissatisfaction of the virtuous cannot be reached by casuistry; their conscience is to be touched by pointing out, not what they have done, but what they are unready to do. Repulsion from the law of Christ, refusal to follow Him—until this is exposed and repented of, these troubled spirits can have no peace. The Spirit of truth, the Comforter, when He is come, will work in the world conviction concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. "Concerning

[1] Emily Brontë.

sin, that they believe not on me; concerning righteousness, that I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; concerning judgment, that the ruler of this world is judged."

¶ The story told of Mary of Bethany is that she went to a shop to buy a box of ointment. The man in charge showed her a box, but she said that she must have something better. He showed her a second box, but even that was not good enough. The third box, costly as it was, did not seem sufficiently worthy. Then the merchant said, "I have a box, but its price is so high that I do not dare to show it to you." "That is what I want," she said; "there is nothing too good for my Lord."[1]

3. The sale and distribution of his property were the necessary preparations in this man's case for the complete discipleship which admits to the Divine Kingdom. The words are not a general counsel of perfection, but a test of obedience and faith which the Lord saw to be necessary in this particular case. The demand of the Divine Lover of souls varies with the spiritual condition of the individual; for one equally great see Gen. xii. 1; Heb. xi. 8 ff. Whether this precept led to the sacrifices described in Acts ii. 44 f., iv. 34 ff., cannot now be known; the *Life of St. Anthony* relates its effect on the great Egyptian hermit.

¶ One day the little group of worshippers upon the plain at the foot of the rock-strewn summit of Sang-keh-soa found themselves in a difficulty. It was necessary to replace the lowly room which served them as church by a larger building, and the funds were difficult to find. Time had been spent in making plans and gathering money, but little had come of it, and the brothers of the "Jesus Church" were losing heart. They met together and prayed about it. Next morning Ah-Chhoang walked a distance of fifteen miles to Chinchew city, to the house of a friend, who might, he thought, help in the matter. They had discussed the matter in every way at Ho-Chhi, he told his friend, but talking was no use. The funds were short; alas! nothing would make them button over. "Have you prayed about this matter?" "Yes; prayer is good. I have prayed, and——" Here he lifted the edge of his cotton jacket, and, thrusting one hand into his pouch, worn sporranwise, produced a paper package. It proved to be a roll of ten dollars. "But, brother Chhoang, you cannot afford to give ten dollars." "I sold one of the fields, a field I bought myself," he added deprecatingly, as if to avoid the possible imputation of having

[1] J. G. K. M'Clure.

alienated any of the ancestral possessions of his family. The eyes of his friend dimmed, and the words came surging to his lips—"You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din." No wonder that churches are built in China, when the love of money lies shivered in humble hearts, and simple people like Ah-Chhoang bring such messages from the hills.[1]

4. People secretly wonder at what seems the extravagance of our Saviour's demand. Yet it is not thought at all extraordinary that passion should do what this man had not heavenly love enough to do. Nature's love and nature's hate will alike empower a man to impoverish himself. And that a man should be able to spend his all for a woman, even for one unworthy of him, and yet be quite unable to spend his all for God and goodness, *is* wonderful, though not at all inexplicable.

¶ Must it not be so, that the more we possess, the less we want to part with it; the more we have got to make us contented here, the less likely we are to be crying, "O God, come back in Thy glory; O Father, make me ready for the Kingdom of heaven"?

> Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
> By wayside graves are raised;
> And lips say "God be pitiful,"
> Who ne'er said "God be praised."

When we have lost our all, whatever it be, we are driven to God. How difficult for those who have great possessions to enter into the Kingdom of God![2]

5. There are few, if any, of us that have not known some who have placed this ideal before them, who have tried to live by such a standard. Not one of us but knows one or two human beings who are better, nobler, simpler than we ourselves are, who live, not for this but for the other world; men in whose presence it is hard to think ignoble thoughts, men who seem to come direct from the immediate presence of God. If Christianity is capable of producing even a very few of these men, it has attained a far greater success than if it had made tens of thousands of moderately religious men. For such men tell us that what they are we too may one day be. Such men raise our whole conception of manhood. Such men bring God down very near to us, within reach of us; they show us Him in whose image they are made.

[1] G. Campbell Brown, *China in Legend and Story*, 160.
[2] Bishop Wilkinson.

¶ I know how difficult it is, as I look back over my own ministerial life; as I think of those who have come to talk with me, when the voice has spoken; as I think of those servants, feeling that they could not go to Communion and could not get to church in that situation, and therefore must go out from a home of perfect comfort, not knowing whither they were going; when I think of that poor woman who came to me in Windmill Street, with her little shop that brought in nothing all the week, and on Sunday brought in enough to keep her in comfort, and, without a word from myself on the subject, said, "I feel I ought to go to church and shut up my shop"; when I remember that man in the prime of life, one of the most popular men that ever came to this church, whom everybody liked, his business was prospering, bringing in three or four thousand a year, and increasing every year, and the voice came to him, and he said, "I feel there is nothing else to be done but to part with all this at once; leave me three or four hundred a year, and I must go out and work for God where others will not go; I am free, I must do it, and sell all that I have." Oh, when they came to me, I remember how my heart shrank and sank within me! I thought what it would be, what it would cost, what a trial—the poor woman without bread, or almost worse, kept by charity—the poor thing! Yet it was not I who told her, but God. She felt sure the voice was from God, and she said, "I must do it, or I shall go back, back, back in my spiritual life." And all that man's friends saw the influence that he would lose in London; how, instead of being looked up to as a man whose opinion would be taken in a moment by all the young fellows in London, they would say, "Lost his head; that St. Peter's ruined him!"[1]

Love is a flame; once set it well alight,
All but the Belovéd vanishes from sight.[2]

IV

The Heavenly Treasure is Found in the Following of Jesus.

"And come, follow me."

1. There is one element in our hearts always to be reckoned with if we are to understand human nature. That element is

[1] Bishop Wilkinson.
[2] Jalaluddin Rumi, in Claud Field's *A Little Book of Eastern Wisdom.*

the necessity of committal to a cause if we are to have sustained interest in it. Men must be anchored to be held. Human nature is like a boat upon the seas, it will stay only where it is fastened. This is true of men so generally that scarce an exception can be found. When bridges are burned behind soldiers, and they then have no chance of retreat, courage and purpose assert themselves. Many a soul that has been weak and vacillating up to the hour of a great surrender of itself to a cause is from that hour strong and steadfast. The greater the amount involved in a self-surrender, the surer the purpose to stand by the surrender. The larger the investment made in an enterprise, the more we desire the enterprise to succeed. If we hold stock in a bank, we often think of that bank and we wish it to prosper. When the people of Ephesus brought their books of magic, the value of which counted up to thousands of dollars, and for Christ's sake burned them in the market-place, they took away their chief means of retreat to heathenism. Christ was now their all. Immediately it became easier for them to be devoted to the principles of Christ's Kingdom and to the success of His work.

¶ One afternoon in the year 1210, as Pope Innocent III., surrounded by a sumptuous retinue of prelates, was walking on the terrace of the Lateran, a company of mendicants laid at his feet the articles of a new association. At their head was a young man who, but a few years before, had been foremost in every scene of merriment; he had been a "successful merchant, a gallant soldier, and one of the most popular of the sons of Assisi." But, while seeking military service and adventure, he had endured a protracted sickness; and when, upon his recovery and his return, his friends gathered at the gates of Assisi to welcome him, and merrily placed in his hand the sceptre of frolic, to their astonishment he remained grave in the midst of their festivities, as one not of them; and, suddenly breaking loose from his companions, he proceeded to the church, and before its high altar there was witnessed a wedding which has been celebrated by Italy's great poet, and is still represented in the same Cathedral by Giotto's art; and at the wedding of St. Francis the name of the bride was *Poverty*. The solemn espousal of poverty by this youth of Assisi was no meaningless ceremony. To him the vow of his soul before that high altar meant emptied coffers, surrender of the comforts of life, patient endurance of evil, and even self-torture, and withal a love of all created things so joyous and overflowing that, as he wandered among the mountains or over the plains of Italy, he

would speak of the beasts of the field as his brethren, and the twittering swallows as his little sisters. The vow of self-sacrifice, and his espousal of poverty, meant the unflinching prosecution of a work of moral purification for which Europe for at least two generations was better, and the founding and resolute administration of an order of missionary monks whom, it has been justly said, the violent learned to love and fear, the rich to respect, and the poor to love. The command of Christ, "Come, take up the cross, and follow me," was understood by St. Francis of Assisi to mean a life given up as entirely to a noble aim as the bow gives up the swift arrow to the mark.[1]

2. All is mysterious, all is repulsive, all is terrific to the hearer—one word alone lights up the darkness; one word alone blends severity with goodness—*Follow me!* Be my companion as I tread the way of homelessness and poverty, of reproach and ignominy, at last of torture, murder, martyrdom; share my reviling, desertion, and repudiation by mine own; soothe with thy companionship sorrows which thou canst not partake in; listen day by day to my teaching, drink in my revelation of a life above and beyond this life; print my likeness upon thee, that thou mayest represent and reproduce it when I am unseen. This shall be the present recompense of the self-devotion which I ask of thee. A thousandfold now in this time it shall be to thee for all that thou sacrificest—riches and lands, kinsfolk and friends, honours and affections; with—yes, I hide it not—with persecutions, and in the world to come, just out of sight, just beyond death, in the world to come—promise above all promise—*eternal life.*

¶ Now I will give you an impossible illustration of what I mean. One of you elder girls is to take a little brother out for a walk through Kensington Gardens, and see the boats and the flowers and all the rest of it. But when you get there you put him on a chair and you fasten him into the chair with a strap, and then by-and-by you take him home, and when you are asked whether he enjoyed the walk, you say, "Oh, no; you see, I had to spend all my time in seeing that he did not tumble into the Round Pond." What an idea! "Why," they would say, "if you had only taken him to look at the flowers and the birds you need not have troubled about the Round Pond at all."[2]

3. In the Divine order sacrifice is the means, and the blessedness of God the end. The Cross of Christ on earth is for

[1] Newman Smyth.

[2] C. Silvester Horne.

the joy of heaven; it was not borne for its own sake, as though God could have pleasure in beholding suffering. Let us then ask the question whether every day our lives are held truly under that law of sacrifice, whether, when that supreme Character may appear before us in some supreme hour, we shall go away grieved to our possessions, or follow Christ to Jerusalem. This is a question not so much of the quantity of our gifts, though that may help to determine it, but of the spirit of our giving. And by giving I do not mean merely giving money. I mean personal giving, often including money, but above all personal giving, like Christ's giving of Himself to the world. I mean giving which begins in the heart, and becomes a power of the character, and, working from within as a new birth of the love of God in the soul, sweeps all obstructions of habit and obstacles even of inherited temperament before it, and is the outflow of the life, the influence of the man, filling his whole possible opportunity of good, —even like that virtue of which we read, that it went out from Jesus and healed the suppliant who touched the hem of His garment. How much of that inward sacrificial virtue is there in our characters ready to respond to the slightest touch upon us? How much consecrated personal power is there in our churches, flowing out in all possible ways upon the city, and into this world for which Christ, in the glory of God, went up to Jerusalem to die?[1]

¶ In his essay "Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature," Bacon says, "'Sell all thou hast, and give it to the poor, and follow me.' But sell not all thou hast, except thou come and follow Me; that is, except thou have a vocation, wherein thou mayest do as much good with little means as with great; for otherwise in feeding the streams thou dries't the fountain."

4. The ruler who came to Jesus was young, and the gospel which Jesus preached to him is peculiarly appropriate to the young. There is a gospel of *flattery* which is sometimes preached to the young. It dwells on the innocence of youth. It speaks of early life as beautiful in its sinlessness. It encourages the idea of natural grace. And it soon becomes an excuse for indolence and the vague listless waiting for perfection. Christ did not bid the young man do without Him; He invited him to come to Him and follow Him.

[1] Newman Smyth.

Side by side with the gospel of flattery is the gospel of *indulgence.* Young men are excused their self-will and self-pleasing, sometimes even their gross sins, on the ground that young men will be young men, and that it is better for a man to sow his wild oats in youth. Taught by experience it is supposed that he will grow weary of the world, sick of sin, and become at last steady, moral, and exemplary in his day and generation.

The gospel of Christ is none of these. And yet it is suitable to the young. For—

(1) *It speaks to their conscience.*—There is no part of a man's life in which his sensibilities are so keen, his mental pain, his spiritual remorse so bitter. Happy he whose conscience at a late stage, even of a Christian experience, has recovered one-tenth part of the sharp edge it had in childhood.

(2) *It speaks to their affections.*—The longing for love is one of the first and strongest impulses of our nature. This gospel, "Come, follow me," says to thirsting hearts, to the young who have none to love them, or not as they would be loved, "there is One who loves you, you personally, with as much concentration, as much warmth of affection, as if you were the only being in His universe; who loved you when you loved not Him."

(3) *It speaks to their energies.*—For there is in the young a capacity of activity. It is the Creator's gift and the creature's glory. This gospel offers the fullest scope to the energies of mankind. It makes it a solemn duty that a man should work; it looks forward to the great future when every one will be judged by his works.

(4) *It speaks to their aspirations.*—I believe there are moments in the early life of all of us when we long after a perfection which is not ours. We have an ardent desire to be better, to be able to say "No" to temptation, to be able with more steadfastness to pray to God and to praise Him. Christ says to us then, "Come, follow me." His gospel recognises and respects these aspirations. Only in following Him can we meet temptation; only in His presence can we hold steadfast communion with the Father.

The white doves brood low
With innocent flight.
Higher, my soul, higher!
Into the night!—
  Into black night!

Beyond where the eagle
Soars strong to the sun.
Nought hast thou, if only
Earth's stars be won—
  Earth's stars are won.

Beyond, where God's angels
Stand silent in might,
Higher, my soul, higher!
Into the light!—
  Straight to God's light![1]

[1] Maarten Maartens.

Believe and Receive.

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Believe and Receive.

Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.—xi. 24.

1. Here we have a summary of the teaching of our Lord on prayer. Nothing will so much help to convince us of the sin of our remissness in prayer, to discover its causes, and to give us courage to expect entire deliverance, as the careful study and then the believing acceptance of that teaching. The more heartily we enter into the mind of our blessed Lord, and set ourselves to think about prayer as He thought, the more surely will His words be as living seeds. They will grow and produce in us their fruit—a life and practice exactly corresponding to the Divine truth they contain.

2. Yet the promises to prayer in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses of this eleventh chapter of St. Mark are so wonderful, that we are almost compelled to fall back before them, and ask ourselves whether we can have heard, or can have understood, aright. At the first sound, they surround our imaginations as with an air of fairyland; they seem to be something out of relation with the severities of the things that are: something out of relation with the necessary stringencies of a moral life. Then, if we feel that there is in our first sense something wrong, and begin to limit, to qualify, to explain, often it is not merely any childish misunderstanding of the promise, it is the promise itself that is slipping away from us; the solemn declaration of Christ begins to mean—nothing very definite or distinguishable: or, worse still, men find ground for pleasant mockery at the hollowness of a religious aspiration so transparently unreal. Do the words mean what they say, or do they not? or what do they mean?

I.

The words mean first of all that *we are to pray and ask for things.* Now this involves (1) the recognition of our need of them, and (2) the utterance of that need.

i. *That we recognise our Need.*

1. This seems to be expressed in the text itself according to the Authorized Version—"What things soever ye *desire*, when ye pray." There, however, the word "desire" is used in the sense of request, just as we find it again in John xii. 21, where we are told that certain Greeks who came up to worship at the feast came to Philip, "and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus," and as Shakespeare has it in *The Merchant of Venice* (IV. i. 402): "I humbly do desire your grace of pardon." Yet the sense of need is undoubtedly one of the conditions of prayer, and Dr. Andrew Murray[1] is quite entitled to write as though the word "desire" in the Authorized Version were used in that sense. "What things soever ye desire," he quotes, and then says: Desire is the secret power that moves the whole world of living men, and directs the course of each. And so desire is the soul of prayer, and the cause of insufficient or unsuccessful prayer is very much to be found in the lack or feebleness of desire. Some may doubt this: they are sure that they have very earnestly desired what they ask. But if they consider whether their desire has indeed been as whole-hearted as God would have it, as the heavenly worth of these blessings demands, they may come to see that it was indeed the lack of desire that was the cause of failure. What is true of God is true of each of His blessings, and is the more true the more spiritual the blessing: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. xxix. 13). Of Judah in the days of Asa it is written, "They sought him with *their whole desire*" (2 Chron. xv. 15). A Christian may often have very earnest desires for spiritual blessings. But alongside of these there are other desires in his daily life occupying a large place in his interests and affections. The spiritual desires are

[1] *The Ministry of Intercession*, 106

not all-absorbing. He wonders that his prayer is not heard. It is simply that God wants the whole heart. "The Lord thy God is *one Lord*, therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*."

2. The best illustration that we are likely to find—and it is an illustration not only of this point but of the whole text—is furnished by the story of the ten lepers (Luke xvii. 11–14): "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed."

The facts to notice in this incident are these: (1) they knew that they were lepers and needed cleansing; (2) they asked Jesus to cleanse them; (3) when He said "Go and shew yourselves unto the priests," although they felt and saw no difference in themselves, they took His word for it that they were cleansed, and acted upon it; (4) afterwards, as they were on the way to the priests, they knew that they were cleansed. That they did not know till they had gone some distance is evident, for we are told that one of them, *as soon as he saw that he was healed*, turned back, and thanked Jesus. We have reached as yet, however, only the first of these four facts—the recognition of a need.

¶ We have wants, and we feel them: honest wants of body as of soul, wants personal, wants domestic, as well as all such aspirations as may seem to be of wider or higher scope. Are not these things true and proper subjects of prayer? "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" is not, after all, the whole of the Lord's Prayer. Is it not followed at once by the more material—"Give us this day our daily bread"? Yes, most true indeed. Every need for body or soul, for ourselves or our children, our friends or our neighbours, in all the detail and variety which belong to vivid personal interest; it is all most true and holy subject-matter for prayer.[1]

¶ *All things whatsoever.* At this first word our human wisdom at once begins to doubt and ask: This surely cannot be literally true? But if it be not, why did the Master speak it, using the

[1] R. C. Moberly.

very strongest expression He could find: "All things whatsoever"? And it is not as if this were the only time He spoke thus; is it not He who also said, "If thou canst believe, *all things* are possible to him that believeth"; "If ye have faith, *nothing* shall be impossible to you"? Faith is so wholly the work of God's Spirit through His word in the prepared heart of the believing disciple, that it is impossible that the fulfilment should not come; faith is the pledge and forerunner of the coming answer.[1]

ii. *That we give Utterance to it.*

1. The desire of the heart must become the expression of the lips. Our Lord more than once asked those who cried to Him for mercy, "What wilt thou?" He wanted them to say what they desired. To speak it out roused their whole being into action, brought them into contact with Him, and wakened their expectation. To pray is to enter into God's presence, to claim and secure His attention, to have distinct dealing with Him in regard to some request, to commit our need to His faithfulness and to leave it there; it is in so doing that we become fully conscious of what we are seeking.

¶ It may help to give definiteness to our thought, if we take a definite request in regard to which we would fain learn to pray believingly. Why should we not take as the object of desire and supplication the "grace of supplication," and say, I want to ask and receive in faith the power to pray just as, and as much as, my God expects of me?[2]

2. This is the second fact that we noticed in the story of the ten lepers. They *asked* for cleansing—"They lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Would they have been cleansed if they had not asked for it? At any rate, Jesus lays down the rule: "Ask, and ye shall receive." And when Bartimæus was brought before Him, He insisted upon the blind man expressing his need, although it was perfectly evident what he needed. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

¶ As God feeds "the birds of the heaven" (Matt. vi. 26), not by dropping food from heaven into their mouths, but by stimulating them to seek food for themselves, so God provides for His

[1] Andrew Murray. [2] *Ibid.*

rational creatures by giving them a sanctified common sense, and by leading them to use it. In a true sense Christianity gives us more will than ever. The Holy Spirit emancipates the will, sets it upon proper objects, and fills it with new energy. We are therefore not to surrender ourselves passively to whatever professes to be a Divine suggestion (1 John iv. 1): "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God." The test is the revealed word of God (Isa. viii. 20): "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them."[1]

¶I kindle a fire in my grate. I only intervene to produce and combine together the different agents whose natural action behooves to produce the effect I have need of; but the first step once taken, all the phenomena constituting combustion engender each other, conformably to their laws, without a new intervention of the agent; so that an observer who should study the series of these phenomena, without perceiving the first hand that had prepared all, could not seize that hand in any especial act, and yet there is a preconceived plan and combination.[2]

II.

We are to believe that God has answered our prayer. This belief rests on three things: (1) Faith in God as a fountain of good; (2) the harmony of our request with His will; (3) His freedom in the use of ways and means.

i. *Faith in God as the Source of all that is Good.*

1. In the first place we know that *God is an ocean of boundless resources.* And then we also know *that prayer is His chosen channel for the application of those resources.* This is everywhere the teaching of the New Testament, and it has been corroborated in the experience of the prayerful of every generation since. Lord Tennyson never had a truer thought given him from "the heavenlies" than this: "Prayer is like opening a sluice between the great ocean and our little channels; when the great sea gathers itself together and flows in at full tide."[3]

[1] Isaac Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*
[2] P. Janet, *Final Causes.*
[3] *Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, i.

¶ The summer before last I happened to be spending a part of my vacation in Scotland, and found my way up into the Highlands. At one point in the journey I came across a lovely little Highland loch, the name of which at this moment I forget. I noticed that some engineering works had been erected at the narrower end of the loch, so I inferred that the water was being made use of in some way, as indeed it was. My companion informed me that it had now become the drinking supply of a lowland town some distance away, and that the work had had to be done suddenly. It appears that during a season of severe drought there had been some danger of a water famine in the district referred to. All the wells ran dry. Neither the people in the houses nor the cattle in the fields could live without water, so it actually had to be carted from other districts at great expense. Then some one thought of the highland loch, many miles away. All difficulties were got over, and a tiny supply pipe was run the whole distance from the loch to the thirsty township. Later on, this temporary expedient for preventing disaster was replaced by works of a more efficient and costly character. But the interesting point about the matter is this: here was a whole population suffering for lack of something that was only waiting to be drawn upon, and had been in existence thousands of years before the township itself. Long before there was any thirst, the water was there to quench it. All that was required was the vision of the man who first conceived the project of bringing the water to the valley. After the vision came the labour—not to create but to distribute the life-giving element which flowed downward in obedience to its own law. Is not this a fairly apt figure of the dealings of God with His children? "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." But we have to ask before the gift can be part of ourselves.[1]

¶ In this same time our Lord shewed me a spiritual sight of His homely loving. I saw that He is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: He is our clothing that for love wrappeth us, claspeth us, and all encloseth us for tender love, that He may never leave us; being to us all-thing that is good, as to mine understanding.[2]

2. The great reason of our lack of faith is our lack of knowledge of God and intercourse with Him. "Have faith in God," Jesus said when He spoke of removing mountains. It is as a soul knows God, is occupied with His power, love, and faithfulness, comes away out of self and the world, and allows

[1] R. J. Campbell. [2] Julian the Anchoress.

the light of God to shine on it, that unbelief will become impossible. All the mysteries and difficulties connected with answers to prayer will, however little we may be able to solve them intellectually, be swallowed up in the adoring assurance, this God is our God: He will bless us. He does indeed answer prayer. And the grace to pray which we are asking for He will delight to give.

To know God simply as an absolute Sovereign, bowing to His doings merely because they are His, receiving His commands merely because He commands, this is not to know God as a fountain of life. Unless the character of God, and not merely the fact that there is a God, be apprehended, there is nothing known of God upon which the soul can feed. See then what a fresh well-spring of life it is, that this is the very truth concerning God, that "He willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; that as God is good, He delights in men's deliverance from evil; as He is holy, He delights in men's deliverance from sin; as He is true, He delights in men's deliverance from unbelief and ignorance and belief of a lie, for all unbelief is the belief of a lie.

¶ Why does the man in charge of a Chinese temple bang the drum and pommel the bell morning and evening? And why do millions of Chinese in their houses tinkle a cast-iron pot when they worship? It is to call the god to attention. And when they pray for riches, sons, and long life (the "three manys" which sum up all their subjects of prayer, in most cases), it is to coax the god into willingness to help them. For those who thus worship, and call it "prayer," know not of a majestic Mother-Love in the heavens, and around them, which always longs ever so much to help and to bless.[1]

¶ One sunny morning, after a spell of dismal weather, a little girl of six came running up to some one I know, exclaiming: "Look, father, how bright it is! I prayed God last night to send us a bright morning *sometime*"—cautious child!—"and isn't it bright now?" The reply was: "Yes, indeed, my child, and you know it is bright every morning if we only go high enough. For the sun up yonder is always shining—always."[2]

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,

[1] W. A. Cornaby. [2] *Ibid.*

What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
  We rise, and all the distant and the near
  Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel how weak! We rise how full of power!
  Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
  Or others—that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care;
  That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
  And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?[1]

ii. *Our Request must be in Harmony with the Will of God.*

1. It is plain that there is a manner in which we can *not* apply the words of St. Mark, a sense in which they would *not* be true. So much at least the rebuke of St. James says clearly, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Christian prayer is not a thing wild, capricious, unlimited. Christian prayer, the genuine uplifting of the heart of a man to his God: —this cannot be as random or as reckless as all the random impulses of the mind of a man. It has limits; it has conditions; it has laws. There are things which may be asked in prayer, and there are things which may not. There are ways of asking aright, and there are ways of asking amiss. The mind that is really prayerful is a mind trained and disciplined. And we. too, if we would grasp the secret and blessing of prayer, must learn to conform ourselves to its conditions; we must rightly learn its spirit, its method, its rules; we must pray, in one word, not amiss, but right.

¶ There is an old legend of two sheikhs of the desert. The one sheikh had many date palms. He insisted on having his own way with the trees. When the boughs seemed dry, he asked for rain, and the rain fell. When the boughs seemed too moist, he asked for sunshine, and the fierce heat came. When the trees seemed to bend under the wind, he asked for frost that the trunks might be strengthened. So what with much asking and changing the trees died. Fearing starvation the sheikh journeyed across the desert. One day he came to a grove of date palms, and found the owner thereof. The owner explained all by saying, "God has blessed my trees abundantly." "But," answered the

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 134.

discouraged sheikh, "I too have date palms. I asked God for rain, and He sent showers. I asked for sunshine, and He sent heat. I asked for frost, and He sent cold. Lo, all my trees are dead." "And I," answered the other, "said unto God, 'For my date palms, Thou knowest what is best,' and lo, the trees have brought forth fruit abundantly, and they live for your hunger."

2. Prayer is *not* the effort of a man to bend or win to himself the will of God. There is in it no effort, no desire, no thought against, or apart from, God. Rather it is man's most deliberate and perpetual effort, through the power of God the Spirit in the Name of God the Son—not against but towards—the realisation of the will and life of God. Make Thy will my will; and my will into Thy will! If the voice of prayer in its moment of supreme distraction reaches its simplicity only in tones which are wrung with anguish, "nevertheless not my will but Thine be done," remember that the perfectness of prayer, not its cessation, is realised in fruition of perfect communion. In agony, or in victory, the perfectness of praying is the praying of the Son of God.

Do we ask for relief—for ourselves or for our dear ones—from sickness, from anxiety, from bereavement? Do we ask for strength, for livelihood, for guidance, for success? It is well. Yet we recognise that, if we could learn aright, our greater longing, even in these, would be for the perfectly unthwarted consummation of God's divinely wise and loving will. In so far as these things, which in detail we ask for, are, or may be, within the divinely beneficent will of God; in so far as any tormenting influence of evil is, or may be, in the withholding of them, thwarting the highest perfectness of Divine benevolence; so far we entreat Him, by the uniting of our earnest will with His will for all good, to let us taste in these things His perfect love.

¶ "Oh, Amma! Amma! do not pray! your prayers are troubling me!" We all looked up in astonishment. We had just had our Band Prayer Meeting, when a woman came rushing into the room, and began to exclaim like this. She was the mother of one of our girls. . . . Now the mother was all excitement, and poured out a curious story. "When you went away last year I prayed. I prayed and prayed, and prayed again to my god to dispel

your work. My daughter's heart was impressed with your words I cried to my god to wash the words out. Has he washed them out? Oh no! And I prayed for a bridegroom and one came, and the cart was ready to take her away, and a hindrance occurred; the marriage fell through. And I wept till my eyes well-nigh dissolved. And again another bridegroom came, and again an obstacle occurred. And yet again did a bridegroom come, and yet again an obstacle; and I cannot get my daughter 'tied,' and the neighbours mock, and my Caste is disgraced"—and the poor old mother cried, just sobbed in her shame and confusion of face. "Then I went to my god again, and said, 'What more can I offer you? Have I not given you all I have? And you reject my prayer!' Then in a dream my god appeared, and he said, 'Tell the Christians not to pray. I can do nothing against their prayers. Their prayers are hindering me!' And so, I beseech you, stop your prayers for fourteen days—only fourteen days—till I get my daughter tied."[1]

iii. *We recognise God's right to answer Prayer in the way He sees to be best.*

Christ's prayer, "Let this cup pass away from me" (Matt. xxvi. 39), and Paul's prayer that the "thorn in the flesh" might depart from him (2 Cor. xii. 7, 8), were not answered in the precise way requested. No more are our prayers always answered in the way we expect. Christ's prayer was not answered by the literal removal of the cup, because the drinking of the cup was really His glory; and Paul's prayer was not answered by the literal removal of the thorn, because the thorn was needful for his own perfecting. In the case of both Jesus and Paul, there were larger interests to be consulted than their own freedom from suffering.

> Be not afraid to pray—to pray is right.
> Pray, if thou canst, with hope; but ever pray,
> Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay;
> Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.
> Far is the time, remote from human sight,
> When war and discord on the earth shall cease;
> Yet every prayer for universal peace
> Avails the blessed time to expedite.

[1] Amy Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as they are*, 267.

Whate'er is good to wish, ask that of Heaven,
Though it be what thou canst not hope to see;
Pray to be perfect, though material leaven
Forbid the spirit so on earth to be:
But if for any wish thou darest not pray,
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.[1]

III.

We shall know that we have obtained what we asked—first, when we act on the belief that we have obtained it; and next, when we see that we have obtained it.

i. *We act on the belief that we have obtained what we asked.*

So did the ten lepers. When Jesus said, "Go and shew yourselves to the priests," they turned and went. They did not wait to feel that they were cleansed; they did not wait to see the signs of it in their hands and faces. They simply took Him at His word and went.

1. Faith is very far from being a mere conviction of the truth of God's word, or a conclusion drawn from certain premises. It is the ear which has heard God say what He will do, the eye which has seen Him doing it, and, therefore, where there is true faith, it is impossible that the answer should not come. If we only see to it that we do the one thing that He asks of us as we pray: Believe *that ye have received*, He will see to it that He does the thing He has promised: "Ye *shall have them.*" The key-note of Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. vi. 4), "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath *with his hands fulfilled* that which *he spake with his mouth* to my father David," is the key-note of all true prayer: the joyful adoration of a God whose *hand* always secures the fulfilment of what His *mouth* has spoken.

¶ Signor Prochet, of the Waldensian Church, tells a story of a long-continued drought in the valleys of North Italy, which threatened to ruin the harvest. The pastor of one of the little congregations arranged to hold a special prayer-meeting to pray for rain to save the crops, and on the day of the meeting groups of people were seen wending their way along the valley, or

[1] Hartley Coleridge, *Poems*, "Prayer."

clambering down the steep hillsides, to join the devotions. As the minister was nearing the church a little girl passed him. He was much struck by the size of the umbrella she was carrying, and laughingly called out: "I fear you will not have much need of your umbrella this weather." "Oh, sir," replied the child, "I brought it because we were going to ask God for rain to-day, and I will be sure to need it before I get home." The minister pondered the words, and rebuked himself for his lack of faith. He had been going to pray for rain, but without any expectation that his prayer would be answered. The faith of the child put new life and power into the prayer-meeting. Before the close there was a sound of abundance of rain, and the minister was glad to share the shelter of the big umbrella on his way home.

2. *Faith has to accept the answer, as given by God in heaven, before it is found or felt upon earth.*—This point causes difficulty, and yet it is of the very essence of believing prayer, its real secret. Spiritual things can only be spiritually apprehended or appropriated. The spiritual heavenly blessing of God's answer to your prayer must be spiritually recognised and accepted before you feel anything of it. It is faith that does this. A soul that not only seeks an answer, but seeks first the God who gives the answer, receives the power to know that it has what it has asked of Him. If it knows that it has asked according to His will and promises, and that it has come to and found Himself to give it, it does believe that it has received. "We know that he heareth us."

There are cases in which the blessing is ready to break through at once, if we but hold fast our confidence, and prove our faith by praising for what we have received, in the face of our not yet having it in experience. There are other cases in which the faith that has received needs to be still further tried and strengthened in persevering prayer. God alone knows when everything in and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the blessing that has been given to faith. Elijah knew for certain that rain would come; God had promised it; and yet he had to pray seven times. And that prayer was no show or play; there was an intense spiritual reality in the heart of him who lay pleading there, and in the heaven above where it had its effectual work to do. It is "through faith *and patience* we inherit the promises." Faith says most confidently, I have

received it. Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift bestowed in heaven is seen on earth.[1]

¶ In 1886, the China Inland Mission under the care of Dr. Hudson Taylor had a force of two hundred missionaries. In a conference for Bible study and united prayer these missionaries were led to unite in prayer that God would, within a year, send one hundred additional workers to their assistance. So great was the faith of this little band of faithful workers that, before the conference closed, one of them suggested that they hold a praise meeting thanking God for answering their prayer, for, said he, "We shall not be all able to come together for that purpose next year." They did so. During the following year the Mission received no less than six hundred applications, and by the end of the year one hundred of these had been selected and sent out to Inland China.

3. The receiving from God in faith, the believing acceptance of the answer with the perfect, praising assurance that it has been given, is not necessarily the experience or subjective possession of the gift we have asked for. At times there may be a considerable, or even a long, interval. In other cases the believing supplicant may at once enter upon the actual enjoyment of what he has received. It is specially in the former case that we have need of faith and patience: faith to rejoice in the assurance of the answer bestowed and received, and to begin and act upon that answer though nothing be felt; patience to wait if there be for the present no sensible proof of its presence. We can count upon it: *Ye shall have,* in actual enjoyment.

¶ I never was deeply interested in any object, I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came; at some time —no matter at how distant a day—somehow, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised—it came. And yet I have always had so little faith! May God forgive me, and while He condescends to use me as His instrument, wipe the sin of unbelief from my heart![2]

O soul, be patient: thou shalt find
A little matter mend all this;
Some strain of music to thy mind,
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.[3]

[1] Andrew Murray. [2] Adoniram Judson. [3] Robert Bridges.

ii. *We shall know that we have obtained our request.*

So did the lepers. It came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, returned, and fell down at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks.

> The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
> And God will finish what He has begun.
> If you will keep the incense burning there,
> His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.[1]

¶ The question: "Does prayer really help you?" put to a prayerful Christian, is about as easy to answer as a certain question once put to a Chinese boatman of the river Han. The current was fairly strong, and, spite of much poling and rowing, we made little headway. Up to a certain point the journey was tediousness itself. Then, having performed a very simple operation, the boatmen sat at their ease, and we sped along grandly.

In a tone of innocent ignorance, I asked the skipper at the stern: "Does putting up that sail really help you to get along?" He made no reply, but grinned, wondering what was coming next. "I suppose you say it catches the power of something no one has ever seen—I believe you call it 'wind' or something like that. But how can an unseen power make this heavy wooden boat to move up-stream? That is what I want to know!" His broad grin exploded into thunderous laughter, and his two assistants said in confidence: "Foreign funny-words!"

But I had a purpose in view. "I say, old chum, have you heard that we Christians pray to an unseen God—an *unseen* God, mind you—to be made better men and women?"

"Aye, that I have, sir. I know that Christians are folks who believe in praying for that. Does it answer at all?"

"Now, old chum, be fair, you know! I just asked you a question easy to answer, and you only laughed at me. Suppose I just laugh at you now. I asked you in plainest Chinese: "Does your putting up that sail answer at all?"

"Well, sir, everybody knows it does, of course. *Look how we're going ahead!*"[2]

"Well, everybody who knows God as a Father, the Lord Jesus as Rescuer, and who really puts up the sail of his heart—*that's* what prayer really is—knows quite as surely that it does answer. Our prayers just catch hold of the unseen power of God, like a fair wind always blowing; and however the 'world customs flow downwards,' we need not be 'down-drifting men.' It helps our boat grandly up-stream."

[1] Mrs. Browning. [2] W. A. Cornaby.

My sorrow pierced me through, it throbbed in my heart like a thorn;
This way and that I stared, as a bird with a broken limb
Hearing the hound's strong feet thrust imminent through the corn,
So to my God I turned: and I had forgotten Him.

Into the night I breathed a prayer like a soaring fire;—
So to the wind-swept cliff the resonant rocket streams,
And it struck its mark, I know; for I felt my flying desire
Strain, like a rope drawn home, and catch in the land of dreams.

What was the answer? This—the horrible depth of night,
And deeper, as ever I peer, the huge cliff's mountainous shade,
While the frail boat cracks and grinds, and never a star in sight,
And the seething waves smite fiercer;—and yet I am not afraid.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson.

The Two Commandments.

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THE TWO COMMANDMENTS.

The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.—xii. 29-31.

1. JESUS was surrounded by His enemies, who were determined to get some advantage over Him. They had challenged His authority and been worsted by His counter-question in reference to John the Baptist, and put to confusion by His parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen. They next sent some expert lawyers, hoping to entangle Him in a matter of politics, and were again brought to confusion by the unexampled discrimination of His answer. Then the Sadducees came forward with a speculative question concerning the future state and the relations existing there between man and wife, and they, in turn, were utterly routed by the deep discernment of the true nature of human relations in respect both to earth and heaven. Among the number of those who had come out to join with His enemies in bringing about His defeat, or, at least, to enjoy His discomfiture, was a scribe who, if an enemy, was at least a more candid one than his confederates. He had evidently been impressed with the singular mastery Jesus had shown over all the questions which had been put to Him, and His superior ability in all matters of casuistry; and especially was he surprised and pleased with His clear insight into the spiritual nature of things, as brought out in response to the question touching divorce as practised by the Jews and countenanced by Moses, and as to the future state of the dead. More candid than the rest, and compelled into a respectful attitude towards Jesus, he asked a question. It was not a captious one,

as had been the others, but was asked with sincere intent. They, his companions, had challenged His authority; this scribe would now test His wisdom, for he perceived that there was more in Jesus than was to be found in a mere usurper and pretender. There can be no final authority where there is not final wisdom. So the scribe reasoned, and went straight to the question at issue, not by seeking minute interpretations of secondary duties, but by challenging Him on the one point which would bring out from Him an answer that would reveal the depth or shallowness of His authority as a teacher and commander of the people. "What commandment," he asked, "is the first of all?"

2. It is not difficult to see why an honest and earnest teacher of the Law, as this man evidently was, should be anxious for an authoritative answer to this question. The Law was large and complex. It branched out into such innumerable details that it was clearly impossible for any one to follow it in every particular. If, then, salvation was to be had by obedience to the Law, which was the prevailing opinion of the time, it could only be by a fair average obedience; in which case it would be a vital question which part of the Law should be most insisted on. It was the function of the scribes and lawyers to explain the Law, and settle questions of conscience; and seeing no one could be expected to keep it all, it was eminently desirable that they should be able to say what was most essential, so that their disciples might make sure of so much, and then the risk of being rejected for not keeping the rest would be greatly reduced. If one could only be sure of, say, a single commandment which clearly took precedence of all the rest, one might make a special point of seeing to it, and content oneself with doing the best one could with the others. For surely it would be a terrible thing if some punctilious devotee who had tithed his mint and anise and cummin, and vexed his soul about a thousand little things, should find at the last that all was in vain because he had overlooked the first and great commandment.

3. The question ought to be of equal importance to the very large number of people in our day who believe in salvation by the keeping of the Law, or, as they would put it, by living good

lives. What they believe in is a fair average goodness. They are fully aware of the distinction between right and wrong, and their idea is that if a man is right in the main, the wrong things he does will not be laid up against him. It is the same old idea of salvation by keeping the commandments; not all of them, for that is impossible, but as many of them as to make it evident that he is a good, well-meaning man, and therefore worthy of a good place in the life to come. What question, then, could be more vital to persons of that way of thinking than the one put here by the scribe—"Which is the first commandment of all?"

¶ If you were to go to some recognised authority in commercial circles, the answer would probably be something like this: Pay your debts; be scrupulously honest: that is the first and great commandment. Let a man only be fairly honest and honourable in all his transactions with his neighbours: that is the main thing—as for the rest, a fair average goodness will be quite sufficient. Or, if you were to address the same question to some leader of fashionable society, the answer would be something like this: Be gentlemanly, or, Be lady-like. Perhaps a French phrase would be convenient, as it certainly would be appropriate: let everything in your appearance, dress, and behaviour be *comme il faut*. If English were preferred, the phrase might be "good form."[1]

4. Was this summary of the Law stated here by Jesus or by the lawyer? In St. Matthew's narrative we are told that the lawyer asked Him the question, and that Jesus replied that the first and great commandment was to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and a second like unto it was this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. "On these two commandments," He added, "hangeth the whole law and the prophets." In St. Luke, however, the lawyer who stood up tempting Him put the question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied by asking him how he read the law. The lawyer himself then summarised the law, in the formula, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live."

[1] J. M. Gibson.

And then the lawyer's self-justification elicited the narrative of the Good Samaritan. It is quite possible, as Meyer supposes, that the lawyer in St. Luke is not the same as the one referred to in St. Matthew; and that the lawyer in St. Luke, knowing the formula which Jesus had already given as the summary of the law, asked his question to elicit an expected answer, intending to pose Him with the casuistical question, Who is my neighbour? In that case, he was disconcerted by the inquiry of Jesus, What is written in the law? How readest thou? and was obliged himself to give the summary which he expected from Jesus. It is this duplicate narrative which leaves us in doubt whether it was Jesus who first selected the two texts (Deut. vi. 4 and Lev. xix. 18) and offered them as the most important feature of the law. But we need not be in any doubt as to His originality and Divine authority in characterising this twofold commandment as the pivot on which the whole law and the prophetic teaching turn. The Rabbis may have given to it a certain pre-eminence; Jesus pointed out that it was the whole law in germ and principle.

¶ Whatever may be the degree of originality in this mode of handling the law, it is clear that Jesus by His precept and example struck out a totally new thought in ethics and religion by His application of the truth imbedded in the ancient law. If the Rabbis recognised a pre-eminence in the mighty precept, "Thou shalt love," none the less they lost themselves and their hearers in an intricate maze of regulations which had little or nothing to do with love. But Jesus gave to the idea such a power and such an inclusiveness that He succeeded in absorbing all the precepts of His law in the one principle. His Apostles unquestioningly accepted this solution of all casuistry. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom. xiii. 9). In St. James, the perfect law, the law of liberty, fulfils itself in service to sufferers and purity towards God (Jas. i. 25–27). St. Peter sums up all his teaching in exhortations to love (1 Pet. iii. 8, 9; 2 Pet. i. 7). And St. John is so possessed with the thought, that tradition presents him, in the renunciation of all other doctrine, simply spreading his hands over the Church with the injunction: Little children, love one another.[1]

[1] R. F. Horton.

They asked Akiba, Rabbi wise and good,
"Which is the weightiest text in all the law?"
He answered slowly and with heart-felt voice,
"Thou shalt thy neighbour love e'en as thyself."
"There is a weightier still," Ben Asai said,
"'This is the book that tells of Adam's race.'
For that declares the brotherhood of man."

It is admitted that neither of these two great commandments is in the strict sense original, because they are both to be found in the Old Testament (Deut. vi. 4; Lev. xix. 18). The originality of Jesus consisted in lifting them out of obscurity, and giving them their position of prominence in the Christian ethical system. How much this was required, especially by the second commandment, we at once see if we take the trouble of turning to the place where it occurs in the Book of Leviticus. There it stands side by side with a commandment not to make a garment mixed of woollen and linen cloth, and not to sow a field with divers kinds of seed. It is quite clear that in a position like that this commandment was virtually lost, and the original reader of the Law would have no conception of its importance. But Jesus lifted it out of its obscurity, and, raising it aloft, converted it into a vision of mankind as He conceived it to be, a family of brothers, a company of lovers.

Another service which Jesus did to this commandment, besides lifting it up out of obscurity into prominence, was the way in which He joined it with the first commandment. These two commandments both stand in the Old Testament, but they do not stand together. They are widely apart, with no apparent connection between them. But Jesus brought them together thus intimately so that they are closely related.

¶ I remember a very able engineer telling me that a number of engineering inventions were made in connection with the building of one of our Glasgow bridges, by one of our most prominent engineers of genius, and he said to me that when other engineers came to see them they were perfectly mad with themselves that they had not made the discoveries, because they seemed to be so simple.[1]

[1] J. Stalker.

I.

The First Commandment.

"The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

From the time of Moses to the present hour, morning by morning and evening by evening, these words have been on the lips of every devout Jew. For three thousand five hundred years, in times of prosperity and in times of tribulation, has the testimony been heard without ceasing. Of no other religious watchword could the same thing be said. The strains sound through the ages like a Divinely authenticated and undying protest, not only against all systems of idolatry, but against legalism and letter-worship. Religion is love, the love of God and the love of our fellow-man, the union of a grateful reverence with a fine human ethic. With this utterance ever murmuring in Jewish homes through the long centuries, like a cadence of the unwearying ocean, no wonder Jesus should have said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law. I came not to destroy but to fulfil."

i. First.

1. This is the first commandment for these reasons—

(1) It is the first commandment on account of its *antiquity*; for this is older than even the ten commandments of the written law. Before God said "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal," this law was one of the commands of His universe. This commandment was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal," for such things to them were very probably impossible; but He did doubtless say to them "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"; and when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him. It was binding upon Adam in the garden; even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this; before there was a necessity for any other command this

was written upon the very tablets of his heart—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

(2) It is the first commandment for *dignity*. This commandment, which deals with God the Almighty, must ever take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but this with man and his Creator. Other commandments of a ceremonial kind, when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend; but this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God and brings His anger at once upon the sinner's head.

(3) It is the first commandment for *justice*. If men cannot see the justice of that law which says, "love thy neighbour," if there be some difficulty in understanding how I can be bound to love the man that hurts and injures me, there can be no difficulty here "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" comes to us with so much Divine authority, and is so ratified by the dictates of nature and our own conscience, that this commandment must take the first place for the justice of its demand.

2. This is the first, the absolutely first, commandment, expressing that which is of the first, the absolutely first, importance; expressing that, indeed, without which no other commandment can in any sense that God accepts be said to be obeyed at all. Before we do anything else, and in everything else we do, our whole being must be inspired with love for the Lord our God. Otherwise we cannot keep any of God's commandments, as God counts keeping. Otherwise we cannot do anything good, as God counts good. Do what we may that appears to men to be righteous,—fast twice in the week; mortify ourselves by our own stern strength of will, till our life is joyless and passionless; observe a thousand and one traditions of men, till we are ready to drop with fatigue; deny ourselves all things in a spirit of ascetic pride,—God is not pleased in the least little bit unless our heart and mind and soul are full of love for Him, as the sole motive of all that we do. Bow and posture as we will, unless our hearts swell with a full tide of love for God it profiteth nothing. To quote the words of our great singer, unless our hearts swell with love for God with

> Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
> Too full for sound or foam,

all genuflections and prostrations are the merest mimicry of reverence.

¶ It is surely true to say that our growing sensitiveness to human sorrow may sometimes have blunted our sensitiveness to human sin, and again in no way more certainly than by adhering to the order of Christ's two commandments can we ensure our recognition of the truth—absolutely vital to the Christian faith—of sin and its significance. The world has recently been enriched by the permanent memorial, drawn by a master hand, of one of the most striking personalities which—in our own land at least—the recent centuries have seen. Whatever opinion any man may have formed about the changes and chances of Mr. Gladstone's eventful life, no reader of these illuminating volumes will, I imagine, be found to doubt the indomitable vigour of his religious faith. In a remarkable passage, headed "Religion the Mainspring," the biographer has eloquently described that characteristic of the man. "All his activities," says Lord Morley, "were in his own mind one. This is the fundamental fact of Mr. Gladstone's history. Political life was only part of his religious life. . . . It was religious motive that, through a thousand channels and avenues, stirred him and guided him in his whole conception of active social duty. . . . Life was to him, in all its aspects, an application of Christian teaching and example." When Mr. Gladstone himself records how the Bible had, at every crisis, been his stay, and recounts the very texts which, at special junctures in his earlier public life—the Oxford contest, his first Budget, the Crimean War, and so on—had, as he says, "come home to him as if borne on angels' wings," it grows clear and ever clearer that he had made his own the principle that, for the Christian man, the love of God comes first, and the love of man is its outcome and its fruit.[1]

¶ Mazzini, all alone, as he tells us in his Autobiography, with the two great things in nature, the sky and the sea, felt the presence of God whose will was the redemption of Italy. Mazzini, in the strength of that knowledge, gave himself to serve his neighbours; he planned a revolt; he bound together the aspirations of the young; he held aloft a noble ideal; he encouraged, he rebuked, he restrained. Mazzini's love, unlike that of his predecessor Rienzi, who took memories for hopes, was not a copy of other men's love. He did not repeat in the nineteenth century the ways of a previous century; he came as a man with a mission; he did what he was bound to do; he had learnt God's will, and with St. Paul he felt, "And woe is me if I do not obey."[2]

[1] Archbishop Davidson. [2] S. A. Barnett.

¶ A child stood at the window of a baker's shop, looking in with hungry eyes. A lady passing by took compassion on her. The little one received the purchased dainties without a word, until at parting she quaintly and pathetically said, "Be you God's wife?" There was profound philosophy at the bottom of that. All true kindness proceeds from the best and noblest—yes, from God within us.[1]

ii. The Lord is one.

The Trinity of our faith means a distinction of persons within one common indivisible Divine nature. It implies, therefore, as its base, that the Divine nature is one and indivisible. It excludes the notion of gods many and lords many. For this reason God revealed the essential oneness of His being *first*; and it was only after Israel had, through many weary centuries and many bitter lessons, learned that truth, that Jesus did or could disclose to His disciples "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." On polytheistic soil no such revelation could have been, in the first instance, intelligible. Gentiles, accustomed to think of a throng of conflicting deities, would certainly have misunderstood it. It was to monotheistic Israel—to Israel, whose whole history had been one prolonged, and at the last successful, inculcation of this primary truth, "The Lord our God is one Jehovah,"—that the later message could be sent with any hope of its being understood, that Jehovah's name is the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When you think how passionately the Hebrews of our Lord's time clung to that peculiar tenet which their nation had been set in the heart of pagan polytheism on purpose to defend—the truth that God is one; and when you see at the same time how such Hebrews as John, Paul, and Peter came to revere Jesus the Son of God as equally to be worshipped with the Father, and received the invisible Spirit who came at Pentecost as no less truly a Divine Person, you must feel that this new revelation of a Trinity in God left quite unaltered their old faith that God is one. It was a mighty and a blessed addition to their knowledge of Jehovah; but it did not shake what they knew before—"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Lord is *one Jehovah*."

¶ The object of Moses in declaring the unity of God was to guard the Jews against idolatry; my object in dwelling on it is to

[1] D. J. Burrell.

claim from you the consecration of all your powers. A simple illustration will make both these points clear. Polygamy is contrary to the true idea of marriage; he who has many wives cannot love one of them as a wife should be loved. Equally is the ideal of marriage violated if a man cannot or will not render to his wife the homage of his whole nature. His affection itself will be partial instead of full, and his heart will be distracted, if, whatever her amiability may be, her conduct offends his moral sensibilities, if he cannot trust her judgment and accept her counsel, if she is a hindrance to him and not a help in the practical business of life. Many a man's spiritual life is distracted and made inefficient, simply because his whole being is not engrossed in his religion; one-sidedness in devotion is sure to weaken, and tends ultimately to destroy it.[1]

> In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
> Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
> Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.
>
> It is the little rift within the lute,
> That by and by will make the music mute,
> And ever widening slowly silence all:
>
> The little rift within the lover's lute
> Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
> That rotting inward slowly moulders all.
>
> It is not worth the keeping: let it go:
> But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
> And trust me not at all or all in all.[2]

¶ There must be chivalry in our love for God. The old knights and cavaliers proved the worth of their love by winning repute for courtesy and gentleness, as well as for daring exploits. King Arthur made his knights of the round table swear

> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,
> Until they won her.

And thus he justified the vow:

> I knew
> Of no more subtle master *under heaven*
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
> Not only to keep down the base in man,

[1] A. Mackennal. [2] Tennyson.

But teach high thought, and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

Notice these words *under heaven*. I am inclined to believe that the poet meant by them that he knew of no better influence in this world which lies under heaven's canopy.[1]

iii. Thou shalt love.

What a strange and startling command, to be ordered to love! We can understand obedience in a thousand matters: we can allow and justify an order to do this, or to do that: we might even go so far as to concede the right to dictate what we should think and believe, so ignorant are we of the reality of things, so dependent on the condescension of wiser and holier men! But love? Love, surely, is the one thing we cannot but retain in our own possession: love, at least, we fancy, is our own: into its recesses, into its deep privacy, who is there that will dare to penetrate without our leave? Why, we ourselves hardly venture to intrude upon the hidden places of our own affections! Yet God assumes the entry even of this last refuge, this secret home: even hither He penetrates with His searching decrees: He lays down laws, He makes personal claims: "Thou shalt love me." It is a rule of His dominion that He should be loved. Nor is it to be merely a vague goodwill that we are bound to give Him; nothing general, or loose, or impersonal, or impassionate will satisfy Him; it is vivid, impetuous, enthusiastic personal love that He orders us to feel for Him; nothing short of this will do at all; love without limit, love without reserve, love without a rival, love without an end, this is His rule, the law of His state: "Thou shalt love me with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Nor is this all. Our affections have yet more demands made upon them. Not only are they to be concentrated, in all their force, upon the Lord of this Kingdom, but they are to be distributed far and wide, over the whole length and breadth of the dominion. This, too, is to be done by order; we are under command to love every brother-man equally with ourselves: this, too, it appears, can be dictated to us.

[1] L. R. Rawnsley.

¶ It is said that one of the greatest statesmen that we have ever had, having gone to hear an evangelical preacher, was heard growling as he left the church, "Why, the man said that we were to love God," evidently thinking that that was the very height of unreasonableness. And when Wilberforce attacked the fashion of religion in the beginning of the nineteenth century, this was the point on which he fixed—that not only was God not loved, but people did not even think that to love God was reasonable. Going to work philosophically, he demonstrated, first, that what he called passion—meaning love—is the strongest force in human affairs; and, secondly, that religion requires exactly such a stimulus, because of the difficulties that it has to overcome.

iv. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

1. If any man—a little weary of the modern cant about charity—should ask, "Why does Christ lay so much stress on *love*? why does He declare the commandments which enjoin love of God and man to be the two commandments which include all others?" the answer is plain and clear. Selfishness is the root and essence of all sin; and love is the one passion that can conquer selfishness. When we do what our conscience condemns, it is because we seek thereby to advance our own interests, or supposed interests, or because we want to seize what we take for pleasure. We set up our own will against another and a higher Will. That is to say, in the last resort, sin is always selfishness, the selfishness which defeats itself. Whenever we do wrong, we are making self our centre—self-interest, self-gratification, self-love. This base passion is natural to us, or natural to that which is base in us; and, being natural, it is strong. The one passion that always masters it, that masters it for a time even in the basest and most grasping nature, is the passion of love. It is of the very essence of love that it is unselfish, that it prefers the welfare, the gain, or the pleasure of another to its own.

Love seeketh not itself to please,
  Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
  And builds a heaven in hell's despair.

It is only lust, that base and sensual counterfeit of love, which—

Seeketh *only* self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a hell in heaven's despite.

2. There is no more deep and permanent pleasure in life than that which comes from the return of love and friendship from those whom you have steadily tried to train and teach, and set forward in life; for whom you have laboured, and sacrificed your own delights, and limited your expenditures, that you might make life easier and brighter to them hereafter. The steady love of children to their parents is the one all-compensating reward of all their toils. Now this *love of being loved,* strongest in the noblest natures, is evidently an image of something deeper still in God our Father, hard as it is at first to think that we can give any pleasure to Him. But so it must be. If Christ speaks of doing always those things which *please* Him, why should not we? Enoch had this testimony that he "pleased God." Divine service ceases when we lose the idea of giving pleasure to God by loving Him and doing His will. The popular loss of this idea is, perhaps, the chief loss of modern religious thought. And it is a loss fatal to enthusiasm in religious life. The glow of a "good conscience" is the Lord's witness to His delight in a disinterested action, or in a sincerely grateful song.

God who registers the cup
Of mere cold water, for His sake
To a disciple rendered up—
Disdains not His own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered:
And because it was my heart I proffered,
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow Him
For ever![1]

3. Let no man deceive you with vain words, when he would carry the whole matter into some region high above you, and say that the love of the Invisible God must differ in nature from that which we have all felt toward the created. The love which God bespeaks is that very feeling which makes you hurry back

[1] R. Browning.

to your home from a journey—and encroach upon night-hours that you may write that letter which is the communion of the absent—and thrill with a joy which cannot deceive, when you casually meet, eye to eye and heart to heart, one from whom years and lands and all save thoughts have divided you—and weep bitter tears at the grave of him whom disease or accident, consumption or drowning, have torn from you prematurely—the love is this love—no colder or calmer, no duller or less exciting—when God, not man, is its object.

¶ Have you never seen a young mother with her babe upon her arm, sitting, with steady gaze of unspeakable love fixed upon her little one, pouring down upon it from her soul-lighted countenance a radiance of tenderness which might awake almost a stone to life, and waiting, with finger upon those infant lips, till they opened in a smile, and the answering guileless eyes dissolved in the sunbeams of a love which could not speak its meaning, but which more than satisfied and repaid her for all her sorrow and her sleepless care? Even so may one see, as in a vision, the Soul in the arms of God, who is Father and Mother both; who hath bestowed on it His own life and redeemed it for eternal joys; but as yet it lies passive and unintelligent in the warm Divine embrace, and all the return that it can make for the "love that passeth knowledge," and for the adoption, and the covenants, and the treasures of everlasting joy, is but as an infant's smile—a flickering ray of sunlight which lasts but for a moment, and which gives but faint promise of the strong filial love of maturity. Now, if the young mother is satisfied, is not God, who made her, satisfied too? If the one reads in the faint and vanishing light of her baby's features the pledge of her son's love and devotion when he becomes a man, shall not the everlasting God understand the smile of His little children, and value it infinitely as the promise of a love that shall strengthen with the ages, and never, never die?[1]

¶ Maternal love is an instinct; but there are instincts which breathe the divine.[2]

Pour out thy love like the rush of a river.
Wasting its waters for ever and ever,
Through the burnt sands that reward not the giver;
Silent or songful thou nearest the sea.

[1] Edward White.

[2] *Golden Thoughts of Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania* (tr. by H. S. Edwards), 18.

Scatter thy life as the summer showers pouring.
What if no bird through the pearl rain is soaring?
What if no blossom looks upward adoring?
Look to the life that was lavished for thee.

4. How shall we know that we love God?

(1) If we love God we shall have *preference for God's society.* We count very precious indeed the society of those we love. Their presence is our joy. We long for their company when absent. We hasten back to them at the first opportunity. We regret interruptions. So the man that loves God desires His society; communion with God is his highest joy. Nothing may compare with the preciousness of fellowship with his Redeemer. He suffers nothing to interrupt his intercourse with God. Did not Sir Thomas Abney leave the Lord Mayor's banquet at the hour of evening worship—though he himself was Lord Mayor—that he might go and commune with God?

(2) If we love God we show *preference for His service.* We are prepared to do anything for those we love. When away from home we scan their letters and read between the lines to divine their will, that we may please them. We plan beforehand, and display that forethought which is one of the best signs of love. We are willing to make considerable sacrifices for their sakes. We give our time, energy, money, thought, and talent ungrudgingly for them. And in all these sacrifices there is the element of joy. We are glad to do it, we want to do it, because we love them. Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her.

¶ If we would know whether or not we love God, we have to ask ourselves just this, whether our love of God builds up for us and through us and in us a life of moral conduct, a life of habit which, down to the smallest details, differs from other men who do not love God. Far from love being a vague, unreal, shadowy, remote thing, it is the very core and heart of conduct, and it is to build up a law, and we are to ask ourselves, "Do I speak more truth because I love God? Am I more honest, more sincere, because I love God? Am I more thankful, more unselfish, more kindly, more pleasant, more gay, more helpful, because I love God?" If I love God it must make me so at each

point, in each tiny detail of my life—in the workshop, in the street, at home.

5. And now let us consider how the love of God is to be cultivated.

(1) You never—either in nature or in grace—you never love an abstraction, you never love an abstract thing. God must be a *personal* God to you before you can love Him. He must be more than that. You must have a sense of property in Him. He must be your own God. It is when you can say "my" that you grow fond. Thomas said, "*My* Lord, and *my* God!" Even as God always says to us, "Thou art *Mine*." For so we have it—pointedly and emphatically and purposely here: "The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord *thy* God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

(2) *Presence* is essential to love, even in human love. If you have not a presence in fact, you always have it in fancy. And the more you love, the more you make a presence in fancy. You realise it. There is an imaginary presence of the person you love always with you. So it must be with the Divine love. You must be conscious of a Presence, if you would love God. God has always provided for this in the Old Testament—"My presence shall go with thee"; which Moses so appreciated that he said he would not take a step without it. And in the New Testament the last promise of the Gospel is, "I am with you alway."

(3) But there is another process—deeper and more mystic—by which love is gendered, and love is fostered. God, that He might be known, and that, being known, He might be loved, took the form of the loveliest and sweetest and most attaching Being that ever walked the earth. And when that would not do, He came to us by a Spirit which, being a part of Himself, is a "Spirit of love," and that Spirit infuses Himself into our spirit. Through that Spirit we are actually united to that dear One, who was incarnate for us for that very end. So we have that one great secret of the highest order of love, *union*. There is union of Spirit with spirit. And there is union of the whole man with the humanity of Jesus. There is no love

like union, the love grows fond, intense, eternal. It is entire love. The love itself is part of God. The love rests. Our whole being gathers itself up to one focus, and the demand becomes possible, and the duty becomes a necessity: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

¶ When one of the Roman Emperors—after a great triumph, a military victory—was coming back to Rome, he went up the Appian Hill in great state, with his foes dragged at his chariot wheels. Many soldiers surrounded him, adding to his triumphant entry. On going up the hill, a little child broke through the crowd. "You must not go there," said the soldiers, "that is the emperor." The little child replied, "True, he is *your* emperor, *but he is my father*!"[1]

Be Thou the well by which I lie and rest;
Be Thou my tree of life, my garden ground;
Be Thou my home, my fire, my chamber blest,
My book of wisdom, loved of all the best;
Oh, be my friend, each day still newer found,
As the eternal days and nights go round!
Nay, nay—Thou art *my God*, in whom all loves are bound![2]

v. With all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength.

The fourfold repetition of the word "all" lays great emphasis on the entirety of the love. This does not mean that the love of God excludes all other love—for then, indeed, the second commandment would contradict the first. But it means that our love for God is to be supreme, admitting no rivalry. Nor is it implied that no progress in this perfect love is possible. To-day we love God to our utmost capacity; to-morrow our capacity may be enlarged, and still we are to love God with all our enlarged capacity. Thus there need be no limit to the growth of love. Our nature shall go on to expand for evermore, and our expanding nature shall evermore be filled with God.

Heart — Soul — Mind — Strength. — These distinctions are not nominal; they are not the urgent reiterations which seek

[1] James Vaughan. [2] George MacDonald.

to press upon the mind an all-important interest; they mark not different degrees, but different kinds of love, each of which is needed to make our piety complete, to preserve devotion from being partial in its directions or morbid in its fruits, to bring our *whole* nature into the fulness of its relations with Him who is both the Object and the Nourisher of all our faculties. With his heart man appreciates God's mercies; with his soul he appreciates God's holiness, the living impulses of His Spirit; with his mind he appreciates the majesty and order of God's thought; with his strength he adores and imitates the constancy of God's will, the righteousness of His rule; but it is very possible for one of these principles or affections to be in a state of high vitality, while others are torpid and unused, not exerting the energy that is in them to make us like to God. For this is the end of every faculty and affection we possess, to draw us towards Him in whom it perfectly exists, and from whom it receives inexhaustible supplies.

No man completely and worthily loves any noble thing or person unless he loves it with his mind as well as with his heart and soul and strength. That will not, I think, be very hard to see. Take, for instance, your love for some beautiful scene of nature. There is somewhere upon the earth a lovely, lordly landscape which you love. When you are absent from it, you remember it with delight and longing. When you step into the sight of it after long absence, your heart thrills and leaps. While you sit quietly gazing day after day upon it, your whole nature rests in peace and satisfaction, Now, what is it in you that loves that loveliness? Love I take to be the delighted perception of the excellence of things. With what do you delightedly perceive how excellent is all that makes up that landscape's beauty—the bending sky, the rolling hill, the sparkling lake, the waving harvest, and the brooding mist? First of all, no doubt, with your senses. It is the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the sense of feeling which in the glowing cheek is soothed or made to tingle, the sense of smell which catches sweet odours from the garden or the hayfield,—it is these that love the landscape first; you love it first with all your senses. But next to that what comes? Suppose that the bright scene is radiant with associations; suppose that by that river you have walked

with your most helpful friend; upon that lake you have floated and frolicked when you were a boy; across that field you have guided the staggering plough; over that hill you have climbed in days when life was all sunshine and breeze. That part of you which is capable of delightedly perceiving these associations as they shine up to you from the glowing scenery, perceives them with delight and takes the landscape into its affection. You love the scene with all your *heart*. But yet again, suppose a deeper faculty in you perceives the hand of God in all this wondrous beauty; suppose a glad and earnest gratitude springs up in you and goes to meet the meadows and the sky; suppose that all seems to tell to some deep listening instinct in you that it was all made for you, and made by one who loved you; suppose that it all stands as a rich symbol of yet richer spiritual benefits of which you are aware; what then? Does not another part of you spring up and pour out its affection—your power of reverence and gratefulness; and so you love the landscape then with all your *soul*. Or yet again, if the whole scene appears to tempt you with invitations to work: the field calling you to till it, and the river to bridge it, and the hill to set free the preciousness of gold or silver with which its heart is full and heavy. To that you respond with your powers of working; and then you love the scene with all your will or all your *strength*. And now, suppose that, beyond all things, another spirit comes out from the landscape to claim another yet unclaimed part of you; suppose that unsolved problems start out from the earth and from the sky. Glimpses of relationships between things and of qualities in things flit before you, just letting you see enough of them to set your curiosity all astir. The scene which cried before, "Come, admire me," or "Come, work on me," now cries, "Come, study me." What hangs the stars in their places and swings them on their way; how the earth builds the stately tree out of the petty seed; how the river feeds the cornfield; where lie the metals in the mountains—these, and a hundred other questions, leap out from the picture before you and, pressing in, past your senses and your emotions and your practical powers, will not rest till they have found out your intelligence. They appeal to the mind, and the mind responds to them; not coldly, as if it had nothing to do but just to find and register their

answers, but enthusiastically perceiving with delight the excellence of the truth at which they point, recognising its appropriate task in their solution; and so loving in its distinctive way the nature out of which they spring.

¶ It is possible to love God with the heart and not to love Him with the soul. It is possible to have a most tender sense of mercies and to have no craving for holiness. It is possible to bless God for His goodness and to have no fellowship with His perfections, no desires that find their rest in the rectitude of His Will, in the truth and order of His ways, in His purpose for every one of us, even our sanctification—nay, to find in these the inaccessible heights, the incommunicable properties, that remove Him from us, that make our God an awful Being, whom we know not as a Father. I do not say that in God's view goodness and holiness are inseparable in their nature, but that with *men* it is a possible thing to love with the heart Him who renews our mercies day by day, and yet with the soul to have no longings after the Holy One, no affections hungering and thirsting after spiritual perfection, to see no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. And this it is which explains many of those anomalies in piety which rash men, spirits of judgment, without the charity of wisdom, set down at once to hypocrisy and pretence. It is possible to have some of the elements of devotion in a state of quick sensibility, and to be nearly destitute of other and higher ones. It is possible to be tenderly alive to goodness, promptly moved by kindness and undeserved mercies, and to have a very defective sense of moral obligation and very feeble desires for spotlessness of soul.[1]

1. *With all thy Heart.*

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy heart"; *i.e.* the love must be sincere. The words of our mouth, and the actions of our life, may seem to betoken love. A man may profess great things, and do great things, and others may account him a good Christian. Men may laud his deeds, and applaud his words; but great deeds and high-sounding words do not constitute love, and God requires a love that, whatever may be its manifestation and profession, has its true seat and centre in the heart. Every man lives two lives—an outer life, lived before men, and an inner life, lived in his own inmost nature, and known thoroughly only to himself and God. The inner

[1] J. Hamilton Thom.

life and the outer may correspond, the one being the reflex of the other; and in that case the man is, so far, a true man. Or the one may belie the other, the conduct not truly indicating the motive, but making pretentious demonstration of motives that do not exist; in which case the man is a hypocrite.

2. *With all thy Soul.*

While the word "heart," referring to man's inmost being, denotes a true will, a thorough devotion of principle and purpose, the word "soul," referring to man's emotional nature, implies the ardent co-operation of our feelings. Feeling alone cannot constitute love, but it will add greatly to its beauty, and augment its force. If there be first of all sincere devotion, then the glow of fervent feeling is grateful to God, it helps, by reaction, to increase the strength of our devotion itself, and it contributes a spontaneity of eager impulse which makes the service of our love to be joyful, generous, and free.

¶ The love of the soul, which is delight in God's holiness, adds to the love of the heart, which is delight in His goodness, the glow of a stronger spirit than its own, and sustains it in existence at times when, if left to itself, it could only feed upon its memories, which then would look inconsistent and perplexing, the present appearing to be all unblessed and dark.[1]

3. *With all thy Mind.*

There is a love of God with the *mind*, there is a love of truth, a thirst for knowledge, a craving for light, an intense and genuine desire, which in some high natures is a deep passion to see things as God sees them; there is a realm of order and of intellectual glory, a starry world which men enter with a feeling of worship, knowing it is alike boundless and inviolable; there is a child-like adoration for the god-like power that rules by reason, and makes all gross and outward things move in obedience to the law of the Eternal thought. The faculties that find their exercise in this sphere are among the mightiest we possess, unwearied by toil, insatiable in appetite; and God opens to them Himself, invites to the contemplation of His wisdom, provides for them worlds of science more ideal than art, more real than matter; and so, in addition to the gratitude of the

[1] J. Hamilton Thom.

heart and to the devotion of the soul, draws upon Himself the calm delight, or the rapt transport, of the intellectual being.

¶ We are certain that the minds of the great theologians, from Paul to Maurice, loved their truths. We are sure that Shakespeare's intellect had an affection for its wonderful creations. The highest glory of the great students of natural science to-day is in the glowing love of which their minds are full for Nature and her truths. It is the necessity of any really creative genius. It is the soul of any true artistic work. Without it the most massive structures of human thought are as dead and heavy as the pyramids. With it the slightest product of man's mind springs into life, and, however slight it be, compels and fascinates attention.[1]

¶ The demand is for "all the mind," as well as for "all the heart and all the soul"; our intelligence must have full scope if our love of God is to be full. Consider the ever enlarging range of human intelligence; how the mystery of one age becomes the knowledge of another, and the mind strengthens by all the truth which it apprehends. Consider the quenchless instinct of inquiry, and the pure satisfaction which comes from the acquisition of knowledge and the exercise of reason. Consider, too, the wide field which allures the mind to search into it, and the nobler thoughts of God which are the result of honest intellectual endeavour. Are all these things temptations to be resisted? only intended to baffle and delude us? It would wrong the excellence of God thus to imagine; our personal affection for Him should suffer if it were so. If our reason is to be offered up a sacrifice to our piety, it must be a living sacrifice, not a dead one. Not in dooming it to lie by, quiescent and disused, while we surrender ourselves the victims of fancy and tradition; but in earnest, honest exercise of it, putting it under the control of that Spirit who is the brooding force of creation and the inspiration of revealed wisdom, do we present it to God in "reasonable service."[2]

4. *With all thy Strength.*

The love must be instinct with a living, practical energy. Not only are the sincerity, the fervour, and the intelligence of our love to be characterised by firmness, and steadfastness, and strength, but the intrinsic energy of the love itself is to pass into the energies of devotion in the outer life. While man's whole inner nature—will, feelings, and intellect—is called to consecrate itself to God, the practical activity of life must co-

[1] Phillips Brooks. [2] A. Mackennal.

operate in the consecration, thus making the love living, manifest, and real.[1]

¶ That word *strength* needs a frequent re-telling of its meaning. It means not simply power to do, though that is thought of more than anything else in speaking of strength. But there is a greater test, and a greater revealing, of strength than that. There is the greater strength that can patiently endure, and do it serenely. The strength of not-doing and not-speaking, when that is the thing most needed, though all the tendency and temptation are to a spilling out at lip and hand, is infinitely more than the strength of action.[2]

Spirit of God! descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay;
No angel visitant, no opening skies;—
But take the dimness of my soul away.

Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own—soul, heart, and strength, and mind;
I see Thy cross—there teach my heart to cling:
O! let me seek Thee,—and O! let me find!

Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear;
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswer'd prayer.

I know Thee glorious! might and mercy all,
All that commands Thy creatures' boundless praise;
Yet shall my soul from that high vision fall,
Too cold to worship, and too weak to gaze?

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven-descended dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.[3]

[1] T. F. Lockyer.

[2] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 102.

[3] George Croly.

II.

The Second Commandment.

"The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Our Lord had been asked, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" and in His answer He seems deliberately and with some emphasis to go beyond that which had been asked; He tells not only the first but the second. He speaks as though that first great demand of Almighty God upon the heart of man, that first great law for the saints, that first beginning, foundation, of the saintly character, as though that were essentially twofold; as though it were impossible to enunciate the first of all the commandments without linking with it immediately the second. Musicians, I believe, tell us that when one note is struck other kindred notes immediately wake up from it, aroused by it; so that those who have a keen and true and sensitive ear can immediately hear the kindred notes following from that which has been first struck. And so it seems to be with this note that is struck by the voice of God in the hearts of His saints. The first great commandment of the love of God wakes, as it were, a second and a kindred note; and our Lord goes on immediately to speak of the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Those who truly, purely, clearly hear that first note of the Divine bidding cannot fail to hear immediately, waking, as it were, out of the heart of the first sound, the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

¶ Unless this second commandment is held in the closest dependence upon the first, it will prove a very imperfect guide to the wise discharge of our brotherly duties. For until we know and love God, we can love ourselves only with a blind instinct; we know not where our real blessedness is, and in loving others even as we love ourselves we could cherish for them only poor and ignorant desires. It is after our spiritual nature has been awakened to the love of God, and is fixed on Him as its end and rest, that to love others as we love ourselves becomes a perfect, practical rule, as well as a right affection; for then only, to

consult for their happiness as we consult for our own, includes their *true* blessedness, and makes *us* their friends and helpers on that course.[1]

i. The Second is like.

1. Think of one instance which may bring before us how strangely the human heart can deceive itself in this regard, how strangely forgetful it can be of that which seems so obvious a truth, that the love of God and the love of our neighbour are held together in the closest bond of likeness. Think of a man who lies perhaps dying, and who knows that he has made an unrighteous and harsh will, in which is embodied some bitter grudge; that there in that which he leaves behind him, to represent his mind towards his fellow men in some way when he is gone, there is his last expression concerning some unforgiven wrong, concerning some cherished hatred, concerning some quarrel that he has been too obstinate or too proud ever to make up, he leaves it there in his will; and he is dying, and he is going into the presence of God, and he would say that his hope is in God, and he knows that all future bliss must be in the presence and in the love of God; and yet while He thinks of that, he can leave behind him so flagrant a denial of all that is meant by the love of one's neighbour.

2. Can we see in what the likeness lies? Why does our Lord tell us so expressly of it? In what does it consist? Let us think of three bonds of likeness between the first and the second commandment.

(1) The second commandment is like the first in that *it is laid upon us all by the same authority, with the same emphatic necessity.* Just as we are all bound by the first commandment, all alike, whatever our diversity of temperament, whatever our past, whatever our difficulties, all alike bound by the first commandment to the love of God, so are we all, without exception, bound to the love of our neighbour. As no power can conceivably dispense us from the love of God, so can nothing acquit us if we fail in the love of our neighbour.

(2) The second commandment is like the first in this, that both, with the same penetration, with the same exacting demand,

[1] J. Hamilton Thom.

pass behind all that men see of our life, all our outward acts, all even that we say, pass right through it all to *the inmost affections of the heart.* As it is required of us not simply that we shall do what God bids us, not simply that we shall offer Him this or that act of religious worship, but that we shall love Him with all our heart and soul, so is it demanded of us not simply that we shall do our duty by our neighbour, not simply that we shall deal fairly with him, but that we shall love him.

(3) It is like the first in this, that *one and the same example is set before us for them both*—one and the same example, even our Lord Jesus Christ. As He is our Teacher, our Guide, our Pattern in the love of God, as He came to teach us, He, the filial heart and mind towards God, as He came to teach us to love God with the love of little children, so we look to Him as our pattern, our one great example in the love of our fellow-men. Yes, we look to Him upon the cross, and we say to ourselves, "There is the pattern of the fulfilment of the second commandment."

¶ Never drive a wedge between the two, for they are most effectually fulfilled together, and not apart. St. John seems to imply that it is easier to love the visible brother whom we have seen than to love the God whom we have not seen. Either failure, however, implies a defect of love in the character. If there is a sufficient moral motive-power in the man's heart to carry his love up to the heights of heaven, there will be a sufficient motive force to carry it to those with whom he stands in daily relationship.[1]

¶ Many good people have withdrawn themselves from all share in public life and work, with the idea that thus they can be more devoted to the culture of their own spiritual life, and to the promotion of the Kingdom of Christ. No one can question the love and devotion of these people. They are among the excellent of the earth. They look up, but do not look down. It is not their goodness that needs rebuke, but rather the selfishness of it. I am not quite ignorant of this danger. I have sometimes had peeps into the inner side of politics and public action. And when I have seen the self-seeking, the glorification of money-bags, and noticed how men who had wealth, but had no ability or fitness for public place and office, who hardly had character, have been put forward as heroes, I have said I will withdraw from all public life and strife and will devote

[1] T. G. Selby.

myself to my church, and to my work as a minister. Then God has come to rebuke me, and has said to me, "Is not everything which is for the good of your fellows your true and proper work as a Christian?" There is nothing the man of God should not touch. And everything he touches should be better for it. He should be like the sunlight, bringing healing and blessing wherever he comes.[1]

ii. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.

1. "How," it is asked, "can I fulfil it? I have done my best, and I cannot make myself love a man I do not like; there is a tract of my life that lies beyond control, I simply cannot fulfil this second commandment." There are six things that men forget when they so speak.

(1) First of all, they forget, surely, who gave the commandment. Who told me to love my neighbour as myself? Did He not know, could He not read, the human heart? Did He not understand what He was saying to me, and what my nature is in which He bids me fulfil His commandment? Am I to look to Him, my Maker, my Redeemer, my Judge, and tell Him, "This commandment which Thou, O Lord, hast laid on me, I cannot keep, I am not made to keep it, it is not within my power"? Can we say that when we remember who gave the commandment?

(2) In the second place, when men so speak, are they not forgetting the lives of the saints? Are we not of one nature, with the same difficulties, with them? Had not they to struggle? and are not we to struggle? and why should that obedience which was possible to them be impossible to us? When you say, "I cannot love So-and-so, I cannot fulfil that commandment," imagine the words coming from the lips of St. John, or St. Bernard, or St. Francis; think of them saying such a thing as that! One cannot, surely, conceive that they would have allowed themselves to press that as an excuse.

(3) Again, do we not really recognise in some spheres of life that men can command, control their love? Should we be satisfied with a father who pleaded that he could not love his children? Should we say that the inability to love his children which he pleaded could be real, could be a final answer, could

[1] C. Leach.

excuse him from the love he owed them? Surely we do recognise the control over affection.

(4) Remember, again, that it is one thing to like and another to love; and often when people say they cannot love, do they not mean they cannot like? Now liking is, of course, a much lower thing than loving, a much poorer, more earthly thing than loving; and as it is poorer and lower and more earthly, so very often it may be harder. For liking may be sometimes, to some extent, a matter of temperament, of sympathy, of taste; but love is a matter of duty, and therefore for love, at all events, we can turn to the grace of God, and often when we find it hard to like, we may find it, God helping us, more possible to love.

(5) Let us once more ask ourselves, have we really tried all we can do? We say that we have done what we can to love some one whom we find it hard to love: have we really done what we can? have we, at all events, done what our Lord would bid us do? The seventy times seven—have we come near that limit of endurance? And if anybody imagines that he has come near that limit of endurance, let him take a further one, which certainly is that by which he will be judged: has he come near the limitation of the forbearance and the love of God? Yes, if we have forgiven, if we have put away the past seventy times seven times, still we are challenged by that which we know of our own lives, and of God's dealings with us. Have we ever come near the forbearance and the forgiveness that have been granted to us?

(6) And last of all, when a man talks of being unable to fulfil the second commandment, surely he is forgetting what grace means—the grace of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, the strength that is made perfect in weakness, the very love of God poured into the heart of man. Are we not forgetting all that that means when we say that anything to which our Lord bids us, anything to which He, our Pattern, bids us, is impossible for us?[1]

¶ We are told to love incompatible members of the families and kindreds with which we are associated, and perhaps they are occasions of irritation to us, thorns stabbing our most densely massed and delicate nerve-processes. We are told to love our

[1] Bishop Paget.

neighbours who are silly, selfish, bad-tempered, void of fine scruples, vicious. It is like telling us to scale a citadel on whose smooth, steep walls there is not a crumb of foothold. But if we first love God with all our hearts, we shall find the earlier commandment become a scaling ladder by which we may attempt the dizzy heights of the second. Through the strength received by loving the infinitely perfect, we shall do what for the moment seems quite impossible. There is nothing to chill or turn back the love we give to Him who is an infinitely worthy object of it. He is ever true, upright, merciful, perfect. If I can attain the habit of loving God, I find a starting-point for all other loves which are binding upon me; and I shall love and help the least attractive, because He loves them and seeks their salvation.[1]

¶ A lad of eight, who had been half beaten to death by a brutal father, was waiting at the prison gates to welcome back the father when he had finished his term of hard labour.[2]

¶ Every man takes care that his neighbour shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he do not cheat his neighbour. Then all goes well. He has changed his market-cart into a chariot of the sun. What a day dawns when we have taken to heart the doctrine of faith! to prefer, as a better investment, being to doing; being to seeming; logic to rhythm and to display; the year to the day; the life to the year; character to performance.[3]

2. How do we love ourselves? Not for the goodness that is in us, with the delight of a moved and grateful heart; nor for the holiness that is in us, in the reverential contemplation of our own spiritual rectitude, with the affections of the soul; nor for our insight into God's thoughts, for the reach of our knowledge, for our empire over Truth, for the harmonies between our reason and the universe around us, with the love and worship of the mind; nor yet for the glow of life that pervades our being, and sets all our energies to turn our aspirations into spiritual fact and substance, for the sake of the joy that comes out of a strong and devoted will, making sacrifices of the lower things for what it holds most dear;—not in this way, nor for these things, do we love *ourselves*; and so, therefore, we may not withhold our love from our neighbour because he cannot be loved in this way, nor for these things. We love ourselves by desiring our own blessedness, by wishing and seeking our own

[1] T. G. Selby. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Emerson.

good, by shunning and deprecating needless pain, pain to which we are not called by submission or conformity to God, or by love for man; and this is the lowest love we must feel for our neighbour, to have benevolent affections; and as the test of such affections, where opportunity is, to render beneficent service towards all mankind. I say the *lowest* love, because there are many men who are worthy of a higher love, even of some measure of that kind of love with which we love our God.

¶ A man's estimate of himself will determine his estimate of others, and you may securely argue back from his treatment of others to his theory of himself. Self-respect is the very antithesis and prohibition of selfishness. This explains the personal goodness of benevolent men, and the personal badness of churlish men. At first sight it is very puzzling that this should be the case. Why, for example, are sensual men almost invariably also cruel? This is one of the best authenticated ethical concords: self-indulgence and forfeiture of sympathy go together. You may see it in societies; you may see it in individuals; you may in some degree see it in yourself. The explanation lies in a nutshell. A sensual man has a very low view of himself; he treats himself as an animal; he sees in his own nature nothing noble and inherently worthy of respect, and he carries that view of manhood into his intercourse with others.[1]

¶ It is fit that we should be obliged to love our neighbour equally with ourselves, because all charity beneath self-love is defective, and all self-love above charity is excessive.[2]

¶ An old weaver in England used to make this prayer each morning, "Lord teach me to respect myself." This was a right prayer. I am a man made in God's likeness and after His image; it is my duty to make the most of myself, not for self's sake alone, but for the sake of others and the glory of God. It is my duty to realise the vast possibilities of my life and the destiny which is divinely intended for me.[3]

3. But who is our neighbour? Christ has answered that question. The Good Samaritan finds a neighbour where he finds a suffering man. "Go thou," says the Saviour, to whoever would waste the time of action in cavil or speculation, in vain talk about goodness when the work remains undone—"Go thou and do likewise." No doubt he whom we find in the most urgent need is the nearest neighbour to our love; but, as a rule, those who

[1] H. H. Henson. [2] Isaac Barrow. [3] D. J. Burrell.

are brought into close personal connection with ourselves through any of the natural relationships of life, seem to be marked out by the finger of God as the objects of special thoughtfulness.

¶ The first step in the ascent of love rises in our own dwelling. From our very threshold it goes up to the eternal throne. Here, too, is "the house of God," and here "the gate of heaven." A heart unloving among kindred has no love towards God's saints and angels. If we have a cold heart towards a servant, or a friend, why should we wonder if we have no fervour towards God?[1]

¶ The rabbis say that once upon a time there were two affectionate brothers who tilled the same farm. On a certain night, after the gathering of the harvest, one of them said to his wife, "My brother is a lonely man, who has neither wife nor children; I will go out and carry some of my sheaves into his field." It happened that, on the same night, the other said, "My brother has wife and children, and needs the harvest more than I; I will carry some of my sheaves into his field." So the next morning their respective heaps were unchanged, and thus it happened night after night, until at length, one moonlight night, the brothers with their arms full of sheaves met midway face to face. On that spot the Temple was built, because it was esteemed to be the place where earth was nearest heaven.[2]

4. There is no conceivable circumstance, no change in a man's inward character or outward condition, that ought to deprive him of this degree and quality of Love. Whatever he may be in himself, though degraded by every vice,—whatever he may be in his relations to us, though inflamed by every malignant passion, and clothed with an accidental power of wounding us where we are most vulnerable, it is impossible, without approaching to his level and partaking of his malignity, that the desire for his good, the best desire that we entertain for ourselves, should ever cease; and the more imminent seems the utter wreck he is making of his peace, the more of earnestness will naturally be breathed into our wishes, and, if the way opens, into our efforts for his rescue.

(1) We are not to understand that God requires us to take precisely the same interest in every other man's career that we take in our own, for this would be to contradict our individuality. But we are to regard our neighbour as *equal* with ourselves in

[1] Cardinal Manning. [2] D. J. Burrell.

the sight of God, and as therefore entitled to the same treatment at our hands that we should expect at his. This will ensure the observance of Christ's golden rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matt. vii. 12).

(2) Moreover, we are to remember that our fellow-men are not only equal, but in a very true sense *identified* with us in Christ. We are one in origin, in nature, and in destiny, and one in the privilege and blessing of the great redemption. Their interests are the same as ours, their happiness is interwoven with ours, their future is blended with ours. Therefore we should look upon all men as brothers, and render to each a brother's love. This will inspire a devotion which mere justice could not prescribe. It will allow of tireless toil to promote their good, even when such good is undiscerned and unappreciated by themselves; of longsuffering patience, in the face of their resistance of good service and resentment of our love itself; yea, even of sacrifice for others, willing, cheerful, eager, like our Lord's (1 John iii. 16).[1]

Conclusion.

The Two Commandments and Christ.

1. The Christian who receives this commandment differs from the Jew of old, not in having another God to worship, or in having different demands made upon him, but in having the same God more fully revealed to him. The God whom we worship is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob,—the Jehovah of the national Jewish covenant. But, under the new covenant, we do not call Him Jehovah. A Christian ought to have deeper and wider conceptions concerning God than were possible to a Jew. He ought to think of Him more habitually as the God of the universe and of the whole human race, loving His children impartially, and dealing with them equally. Such thoughts are in harmony with our wider range of knowledge, with the acquirements and habits of modern civilisation. But Christian views of the nature and character of God, such as recognise most largely the all-pervading operations of Divine love and justice, have not grown out of the science and culture of

[1] T. F. Lockyer.

modern times. They are due to that revelation of the Father which was made in Christ. As the first believers studied the nature of God, not in books, however holy, or in commandments, however imperative, but in the person of the Son of Man, the horizon of their thoughts was inevitably widened. They saw all mankind embraced in the Son of Man. They discerned the lofty and spiritual character of the relation between God and men. They saw what a perfect fatherliness there is in the love of God towards men; they saw that men's love towards God must be free, enlightened, and spiritual. To the Israelite of old God was known primarily as the Being who had given a promise to Abraham and to his seed, then as the Jehovah, or I AM, from whom the law proceeded. He gained his acquaintance with the name and nature of the invisible God through national forms and symbols, and through acts of providence and government which especially concerned his nation. Various limitations necessarily attended such a knowledge of God, and these limitations are associated with the Jewish name of God. But to the Christian, God is primarily the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the Son of Man.

Therefore the law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength, so far from having been weakened, must have become only more stringent and absolute. The Jew was commanded to love God because God had called out his race and had delivered it from bondage, and placed it in a good land, and continually manifested Himself in new favours to His people. *We* are called upon to love God because He has so loved us as to send His only-begotten Son that we might be reconciled to Him and might have the life of sonship, and because by His Spirit He is ever speaking words of grace and comfort and hope to our souls.[1]

2. Notice how strictly all the new commandments of the Kingdom are included in love to God and love to man. The conviction slowly grows upon us that every requirement which is not immediately referable to the precept, Thou shalt love, may be safely eliminated from the Christian law. This is the hall-mark of all the genuine laws of the Kingdom. If we find

[1] J. Ll. Davies.

a law without the hall-mark we may safely disregard it. On the other hand, every commandment which receives this stamp immediately becomes obligatory. The Sermon on the Mount, viewed microscopically, presents a broad surface of precepts which cover life in this world and in the world to come; but viewed telescopically it resolves itself into the large and lucent planet of love, which shines in the heavens as Hesper-Phosphor, the star of evening and of morning. If only we could gain love in its divine fulness, we should "know all mysteries and all knowledge."[1]

3. The reply of Jesus to the question concerning the commandments teaches us that the express intent of the decalogue is to secure such behaviour towards God and man as shall comport with true love; and that therefore, if only our hearts are right with God and with man, the full purpose of the law will be attained, for "love is the fulfilment of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). It is only by the grace of the Gospel, however, that such fulfilment of the law is made possible; for "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 10, 19). Nor is this true merely of our love to God; for the love of our neighbour likewise needs the interpreting of the Cross: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; *even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" And "hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us" (John xiii. 34; 1 John iii. 16). A new interpretation, and a new inspiration, have come to us through the exceeding love of our Saviour Christ; so that, real as was the law of holiness graven by God on the tablets of the heart, and august as was the majesty of its proclamation on the Mount, yet doubly, tenfoldly, more real and strong, and ineffably sacred, is the love that now lights it up with new meaning, and "constraineth us" (2 Cor. v. 14) to its eager and free fulfilment.[2]

As the ample moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light

[1] R. F. Horton. [2] T. F. Lockyer.

In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own;
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power
Capacious and serene. Like power abides
In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,
From the encumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment—nay, from guilt;
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,
From palpable oppressions of despair.[1]

[1] W. Wordsworth.

Not Far from the Kingdom.

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NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.—xii. 34.

IF these had not been the words of Jesus Christ, there would probably have been some Christians found strongly objecting to them. They would have said—"No one is nearer to the Kingdom of God than another, for all men are alike dead in trespasses and sins. How can there be degrees of nearness when every one is at an infinite distance?" There is a side of truth in this. The difference between Christian and non-Christian is one not of degree but of kind. "Once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." And yet there are different degrees of approximation to the light. Our world is closer to the edge of dawn in one part of its course than another. The blind men who, whether through God's providence or their own choice, took their seat by the wayside at Jericho, were nearer receiving their sight than they had ever been in their lives before, and nearer still when their ear was caught by the tread of the multitude and they began to call on Jesus of Nazareth as He passed by. And there are circumstances and associations in life that still bring some men closer to the Gospel than others. There are dispositions of mind and attitudes in certain persons towards it which make us very anxious that they should take but one decided step; which cause us to wonder why, when they are so near, they go no farther. They speak so discreetly about religious things, and have so amiable and reverent a spirit, that we feel as if Christ would still single them out, as He did this scribe, and say tenderly, regretfully, may we not add hopefully?—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."[1]

[1] John Ker.

We may divide the subject into four parts—

I. The Kingdom.
II. The Scribe.
III. Not far from the Kingdom.
IV. Not in the Kingdom.

I.

The Kingdom.

1. What is the meaning of this expression, "the kingdom of God," which was so frequently on the lips of our Lord? It occurs fourteen times in the Gospel of Mark, thirty-two times in that of Luke, while the equivalent phrase, "the kingdom of heaven" (or more properly, the Kingdom of the Heavens) occurs thirty-two times in the Gospel of Matthew. The Kingdom is the rule of God, whether in the human heart or in society. It exists now, but it has its full realisation in eternity. Some have to seek and gain it. Those who have gained it have to labour to retain it, and this retaining may be regarded as winning it.

¶ It is to be noted that Christ Himself never gave any definition of the Kingdom, and perhaps it is not wise for us to attempt to do so. Any definition which we could frame would be almost certain to exclude important elements of truth. He seems to have used more than one phrase to express it, and He places each phrase in a variety of contexts which do not always seem to be quite harmonious. The idea of the Kingdom is planted in the minds of His hearers as a sort of nucleus round which different truths may gather. The Kingdom is sometimes the Way, sometimes the Truth, sometimes the Life. Perhaps most of all it is the Life. It is something living, organic, and inspiring, in which the will of God, through the free and loyal action of those who receive it, prevails. It works inwardly both in individuals and in communities, but it manifests itself outwardly. It wins adherents, and inspires and controls them. And it possesses powers, not merely of growth and improvement, but of recovery and reformation. While it prevails against the opposition and persecution of enemies, it triumphs also in the long-run over the errors and slackness and corruption of its own supporters. We possess it, and yet we have to seek it and win it. It is *within* us, and yet we have *to strive to enter* it. The truth about it is so vast that we need to have it stated in all kinds of ways in order to appropriate some of it.

2. The expression shows clearly that there is a "kingdom of God" in this world, and that it has distinct boundary lines. Those boundary lines do not shade off so that either it should be impossible to say whether you are in it or not in it, or that you can be partly in it and partly not in it. The words evidently convey the contrary: you may be "near" it, or you may be "far" from it, but either you are in it, or you are out of it.

3. Observe the negative side. The "kingdom of God" is not the Church. The Church is visible, the Kingdom is not. The Kingdom is the end, complete, perfect, and final; the Church is the means to the end, working towards perfection and striving to realise its ideal. So far as it expresses the will and character of the Messiah, the Church may be called the Kingdom of Christ, but it is not what is set before us in the Gospels as "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of the heavens."[1]

II.

The Scribe.

1. *The office of Scribe.*—The scribes combined a scientific and technical knowledge of Hebrew laws, and of Hebrew scriptures generally, with the skill of trained teachers in expounding them to the common people. They were the teachers of their countrymen. Holding the key of knowledge, they were charged with the duty of unlocking the mystery and bringing out the meaning of the written word. Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses. All know how much the restored exiles were indebted to him, how loyal he was to God, and how faithfully he served his generation. The office of scribe was alike useful and honourable, and they who filled it worthily deserved well of their contemporaries. Our Saviour has taught us the value of the labours of a good scribe: "Every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

[1] A. Plummer.

But there was a tendency in the profession to narrowness, to exclusiveness, to the traditionary, to the official. They sank into copyists, into mere echoes of human voices, instead of "making the people understand the law of God." They paid more attention to glosses than to the original text, to commentaries than to the Scriptures themselves, to tradition than to the revelation which God had made of His mind and will. These scribes, in course of time, thought more of the lanterns of human authorities than of the light of heaven; "making void the word of God by their tradition." For the most part, in the days of our Saviour, the scribes were "blind leaders of the blind." They no longer helped men into the Kingdom, but hindered those who would enter. It seems that there was even more of moral than of intellectual degeneracy among them. They had not only lost touch of eternal and Divine verities, but they had also substituted men's devices for God's commandments; their study of the letter had ceased to profit, while their refinements and rules had killed the spiritual and put into its place the ceremonial. The outcome of all this, its effect upon the scribes themselves, is seen in the statement by our Lord: "Beware of the scribes which desire to walk in long robes, and to have salutations in the marketplaces, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts: they which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater condemnation."

2. *This Scribe.*—The praise which Jesus bestowed upon this lawyer is best understood when we *take into account the circumstances*, the pressure of assailants with ensnaring questions, the sullen disappointment or palpable exasperation of the party to which the scribe belonged. He had probably sympathised in their hostility; and had come expecting and desiring the discomfiture of Jesus. But if so, he was a candid enemy; and as each new attempt revealed more clearly the spiritual insight, the self-possession and balanced wisdom, of Him who had been represented as a dangerous fanatic, his unfriendly opinion began to waver. For he too was at issue with popular views: he had learned in the Scriptures that God desireth not sacrifice, that incense might be an abomination to Him, and new moons and

sabbaths things to do away with. And so, perceiving that He had answered them well, the scribe asked, on his own account, a very different question, not rarely debated in their schools, and often answered with grotesque frivolity, but which he felt to go down to the very root of things. Instead of challenging Christ's authority, he tried His wisdom. Instead of striving to entangle Him in dangerous politics, or to assail with shallow ridicule the problems of the life to come, he asked, What commandment is the first of all? And if we may accept as complete this abrupt statement of his interrogation, it would seem to have been drawn from him by a sudden impulse, or wrenched by an overmastering desire, despite of reluctance and false shame. The Lord answered him with great solemnity and emphasis. He might have quoted the commandment only. But He at once supported the precept itself and also His own view of its importance by including the majestic prologue, "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The questioner saw all the nobility of this reply; and the disdain, the anger, and perhaps the persecution of his associates could not prevent him from an admiring and reverent repetition of the Saviour's words, and an avowal that all the ceremonial observances of Judaism were as nothing compared with this.

III.

Not Far from the Kingdom.

1. "Jesus saw that he answered discreetly." While the scribe was judging, he was being judged. As he knew that Jesus had answered well, so Jesus saw that he answered *discreetly*; and in view of his unprejudiced judgment, his spiritual insight, and his frank approval of One who was then despised and rejected, He said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

¶ Under the old Theocracy "the far" are either exiled Jews (Isa. lvii. 19) or the Gentiles (Eph. ii. 13); distance from the new Kingdom is measured neither by miles nor by ceremonial standards, but by spiritual conditions. The man was to some

extent intellectually qualified for the Kingdom; certainly he had grasped one of its fundamental principles. It would be interesting to work out a comparison between this scribe and the ruler of x. 17. In both cases something was wanting to convert admiration into discipleship. If wealth was the bar in one case, pride of intellect may have been fatal in the other. The mental acumen which detects and approves spiritual truth may, in the tragedy of human life, keep its possessor from entering the Kingdom of God.[1]

Thou strong and loving Son of Man,
Redeemer from the bonds of sin,
'Tis Thou the living spark dost fan
That sets my heart on fire within.
Thou openest heaven once more to men,
The soul's true home, Thy Kingdom, Lord,
And I can trust and hope again,
And feel myself akin to God.[2]

2. This is one of the many instances in which Jesus took a very kind view; and saw—and was not afraid to say that He saw—the good that was in every one. Many, perhaps, see it, who do not think it well to say that they see it. You need not be afraid. True praise never does any harm. On the contrary, it softens and humbles. This man belonged to a class which had no right to expect any indulgence at Christ's hand; and there was a good deal of the feeling of superiority or patronage in what he had said. And after all, it was very partial truth, and did not even touch the great truth of all, which Christ came to teach and to be. Nevertheless, Christ sees the good points. If the scribe had not spoken very humbly, he had been intelligent and discriminating,—he had spoken *discreetly*. And if he did not see the whole truth, or the chief truth, his thoughts were leading on in that direction. And Christ, who likes to see nearness rather than farness,—and who discovers the kindling of the flax even by its smoking,—said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

¶ It would be very well if we copied Christ in our familiar intercourse; and always sought out, not the points of disagreement, but of agreement, on which to dwell in all our conversation; and especially in our conversation upon religious subjects.

But there is a much higher lesson than this contained in

[1] H. B. Swete. [2] Novalis.

the kindliness of our Saviour's conduct. If any of us are ever inclined to think of God as a fault-finder,—as One who is quick to see what is wrong, and who does not see and appreciate what is good in us,—let us read the accounts of Christ's intercourse with those among whom He was thrown; and we will unlearn our false estimate of that kind, loving, hopeful heart. Not our own mother likes more to magnify our best traits.[1]

3. What was there in this man, what is there in any man, that makes it possible for Christ to say to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God"?

(1) There is a nearness that is brought about by *intellectual sincerity*. We may believe that this was true of the lawyer in the narrative. He appears to have been an anxious inquirer, from the intellectual standpoint. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly," that is, wisely, thoughtfully, intelligently, "He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Sincere, honest thought brings the thinker close to those higher truths which are not contrary to reason, but which unassisted reason does not apprehend.

¶ Dr. Johnson was accustomed to say, "If a man thinks deeply he thinks religiously"; and deeply pondering the problems of nature, life, and duty, men have often found themselves brought to His feet who spake as never man spake. No merely intellectual endeavour can bring us into the enjoyment of saving truth and spiritual satisfaction; it may easily prepare us, however, for the word of Christ, and to receive in Him the fulness of the blessing of reconciliation and peace. In reading the writings of authors known as agnostics, utilitarians, and sceptics, we must often feel that while verbally they seem a long way from the Christian creed, yet actually they come very near it in the doctrines they accredit and the spirit they reveal. They use other language than theologians use, they contend against this or the other position of conventional religion, they suffer from many misconceptions and prejudices, yet are they in fact not unlike this lawyer in the great truths they admit and in the fine spirit they display; and we believe that our Lord says of these, as of the intellectual seeker in the text, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." They are not in the Kingdom, but they are enamoured of its walls of jasper and gates of gold.

¶ John Bright said of a certain freethinker that he was "a Christian without knowing it"; and although we cannot allow

[1] J. Vaughan.

that a man can be a Christian without being aware of it, it yet remains possible that sincere reflection may bring a doubting thinker much nearer to the evangelical truth than he apprehends. Let us never discourage reading, reflection, research, as if these necessarily put the thinker farther from Christ. By intellectual processes many are brought to the threshold of the spiritual Kingdom: just as the star guided the wise men of old into His presence who came to guide our feet into the way of peace.[1]

(2) There is a nearness to personal godliness that is brought about by *moral integrity*. As some are brought near to the kingdom by intellectual influences, others approach it from the standpoint of conscience. We cannot fail to detect the genuine ethical ring in this interlocutor: "Which is the first commandment of all?" And when Jesus had indicated the twofold supreme commandment, the scribe said unto Him, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." This is not the expression of a merely curious or polemical temper, there is nothing here captious or controversial, but at once we feel that we are dealing with one who is deeply sincere, and is anxious to understand and possess the very essence of righteousness. And our Lord, who knew what was in man, instantly recognised the scribe's moral sincerity and enthusiasm. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

¶ The biographer of Horace Bushnell tells us that the young student for seven years failed to find the power of Christ. There was nothing positively or distinctively Christian about him, and there was in him a growing spirit of doubt and difficulty as to religious doctrine; yet during all this time of grave perplexity and distress he was marked by scrupulous conscientiousness, stern integrity, purity, and honour, and in the end he became the confessor of Christ with the power of Christ.[2]

We need it every hour—
A conscience clear,
That shall be as a tower
Of strength and cheer.

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] *Ibid.*

We need it every hour—
A true pure life,
Which failure cannot sour
Or turn to strife.[1]

(3) There is a nearness to personal godliness that is brought about by *ceremonial faithfulness.* A true inclination and susceptibility of soul are developed by a right use of the Divinely appointed means and channels of grace. It seems that the faithfulness of this scribe to the study of the law and the ordinances of worship had brought him hard by the blessing.

¶ "Oh, there are worse things in the world than going to church," answered Dr. Elliot. "Farquhar preaches a fine discourse, and, joking apart, you'll get into the way of the thing. I really enjoy it. I remember once when I was a student going home for my Spring holidays and walking through the fields to church with my mother on a fine morning. I've never forgotten the look on her face when she turned to me and said—

I joy'd when to the house of God,
Go up, they said to me.

In these days, I thought it was a way mothers had. But now, there's no saying, I may get to have that inward look on my face too."

"You're a good fellow, Elliot! I don't count this a visit, mind! Come often and see us," Colonel Morton said; for the doctor had turned to go as he finished the sentence.[2]

IV.

Not in the Kingdom.

1. "Not far from the kingdom of God." Was that a satisfactory position, or was it not? There is a conventional way of looking at it which is occupied mainly with the unsatisfactoriness of it. "Not far from it: not *in* it. The man might just as well be miles away." A very common way that of looking at the position. It is not Christ's way. He says this of a certain young man with a feeling of genuine respect and admiration for him. For the moment, at any rate, under the quickening influence of the magnetic inwardness of Christ's teaching, so true,

[1] Sara A. Underwood. [2] J. F. Hogg, *The Angel Opportunity*, 101.

so thorough, so real, the scribe—for he was a scribe—with all his traditions, had been lost in the man, and he had felt a thrill of responsiveness to Christ which he could not suppress. Against all his prejudices he acknowledged the rare spirit of Christ's reply to the question he addressed to Him, and the feeling was mutual. Christ and this man drew to one another. There was not much difference between them on the matter of the supreme demand of God. And Christ says so. "You are not far from the truth; you are pretty near the mark; there is not very much wrong with your views." That is what Christ means. Certainly not that he is as hopeless as if he were utterly astray. Christ meant to commend and encourage the man.

2. "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," said Christ, and we may be sure as He said the words He accompanied them with a loving smile. And yet if there is tenderness in this word of Christ there is severity too. Not *far*—no, but not *in*. And though not far, a man may yet be never in. Just as a ship that has buffeted the oceans of half the globe may be wrecked on the last night, when the passengers are making up their baggage, and perish almost in sight of home, so there are men who come very near Christ, and then drift away, and never have the same holy contiguity again. It is a solemn thing to be not far from the Kingdom. It is a great responsibility. May it be ours to make it also a great reward.

¶ Dante, in speaking of those who lived in dead indifference, without either "infamy or praise," says that he saw in the other world the shade of him who "with ignoble spirit refused the great offer." It has been a disputed question who was in the poet's eye, enduring the eternal shame of declining to take one noble step. Those surely are in the right who find him in that young man who turned away sorrowful when the Lord said, "Come, follow me"; for, as has been observed, nothing that ever happened in the world could be so justly called, as Dante calls it, "the great refusal." If anything can fill the future world of sin and loss with tormenting regret, it must be that the Kingdom of God was so near, the call to it so free, and that the opportunity was fatally and totally lost. How sadly does the wise man say, "for man knoweth not his time," and what a sorrow was in the heart of Christ when He said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace."

Not far from the Kingdom of God, and yet this *not far* may lose it all![1]

¶ The saying is true as applied to many things, and it is equally true with regard to the soul. The penitence that is not carried through is nothing. You remember Browning's lines—

> Oh the little more, and how much it is!
> And the little less and what worlds away!

That is just the picture of the character we have before us. You may, if you like, see him in a thousand walks of life. I once heard a criticism of a preacher—"He has just missed being a great preacher." I felt it to be true. What was lacking one could not say, for everything seemed so excellent; but the combined result was just as my friend had said. He had just "come short of being a great preacher."[2]

¶ Golfers have a well-understood phrase, "never up, never in." The aim of the game is to get the little ball into the little hole. And the meaning of the phrase is, if you do not play hard enough to get the length of the hole, you will not get into it. It may be a beautiful putt, "lie on the lip of the hole," "a picture." But "it is short"; "never up, never in." The same is true here.[3]

3. What is needed to make a man decidedly belong to the Kingdom of God? Christ's words have shown that with all that is favourable in this man, there is still something wanting. Christ had that Divine insight which let Him see into the hearts of men, as well as into the heart of things, and which enabled Him to range them in their true place. We have neither the power nor the right thus to judge the inward nature of men. It is always right for us, however, to look as far as we can into the heart of *things*, and to use the principles we learn there for ascertaining our own true position.

(1) He appears to have had *no sense of the need of pardon.*

In what he says there is no apparent perception of the evil of sin, and no application for pardon and help. He perceives the claim of God's law, and admits it to be spiritual; but, so far as we can see, there is no conviction of that hopeless violation of it which can be met only by a Divine deliverer like Christ.

"The great mystery of religion," says Bishop Westcott, "is

[1] John Ker. [2] W. Mackintosh Mackay. [3] R. J. Drummond.

not the punishment but the forgiveness of sin." Forgiveness involves repentance; Christ came preaching the Gospel and saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the gospel." Repentance, therefore, is an essential condition of entering the "kingdom." When a man experiences this sense of forgiven sin he becomes eager for something better, desirous of a higher, and, shall we add, a safer life. A change has come over that man, a change both of motive and of power. He longs for and attempts what he never cared about before; he is a new being. But he cannot remain content with merely understanding the Kingdom. It is a necessary sequence that he should enter it, that he should claim its gifts and privileges, that he should enrol himself as one of its citizens; and so the change which takes place in him must be correspondingly marked, and it becomes clear what are the essentials, or in another sense, the conditions of this entrance.[1]

¶ How they rise before us!—the sweet reproachful faces of those whom we could have loved devotedly if they had been willing to be straightforward with us; whom we have lost, not by our own will, but by that paralysis of feeling which gradually invades the heart at the discovery of small insincerities. Sincerity seems our only security against losing those who love us, the only cup in which those who are worth keeping will pledge us when youth is past.[2]

(2) *He did not recognise in Christ the Divine Teacher.*—While he admires Christ's teaching, he speaks as one might to another on his own level: "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth"; but there is no appearance of his soul bowing before Him as a teacher sent from God, still less of his being ready to follow Him as a spiritual leader, and to cast in his lot with Him, to walk in His steps and to do His will. What was wanted was just the recognition of the King. Christ did not tell him that. He left him to discover it. And it is just the discovery that many a man has to make in order to enter the kingdom. It is the oath of allegiance to Christ, which we commonly call "faith," that is still wanting. There are many men of fine character, of generous thoughts and noble lives, whom we naturally and properly admire. And yet there is a defect in them of which

[1] J. H. Rogers. [2] Mary Cholmondeley, *Red Pottage*.

even they themselves are conscious, although what it is they do not know. It is the want of the deep recognition of the things that are unseen, the solemn sense of the supremacy of the spiritual. Could that arise in them, they would be in the kingdom and recognise that it is the Kingdom of God.

His case reminds us of the rich young ruler (x. 17). The Saviour is just "going forth" when one rushes to overtake Him, and kneels down to Him, full of hope of a great discovery. He is so frank, so innocent and earnest, as to win the love of Jesus. And yet he presently goes away, not as he came, but with a gloomy forehead and a heavy heart, and doubtless with slow reluctance. There is indeed a charming frankness in his bearing, so that we admire even his childlike assertion of his own virtues, while the heights of a nobility yet unattained are clearly possible for one so dissatisfied, so anxious for a higher life, so urgent in his questioning, What shall I do? What lack I yet? This inquirer honestly thinks himself not far from the great attainment; he expects to reach it by some transcendent act, some great deed done, and for this he has no doubt of his own prowess, if only he were well directed. What shall I do that I may have eternal life, not of grace, but as a debt—that I may inherit it? His question supplies the clue to that answer of Christ which has perplexed so many. The youth is seeking for himself a purely human merit, indigenous and underived. And the same, too, is what he ascribes to Jesus, to Him who is so far from claiming independent human attainment, or professing to be what this youth would fain become, that He said, "The Son can do nothing of himself. . . . I can of mine own self do nothing." The secret of His human perfection is the absolute dependence of His humanity upon God, with whom He is one. No wonder, then, that He repudiates any such goodness as the ruler had in view.[1]

¶ There is a legend of St. Peter, that he had always by him a cloth wherewith he wiped his eyes, which were at last red with weeping. And I can well believe it. When he was asked why he wept, he said that "when he recalled that most sweet gentleness of Christ with His apostles," he could not restrain his tears. Christ must, indeed, have been perfect in kindness and tenderness. And even so, and even such, is He now daily with us; but we perceive it not.[2]

[1] G. A. Chadwick. [2] *Watchwords from Luther.*

¶ Dear sad J. is full of fears, but the vision will presently come, and he will know the Lord as "all things and in all," and he will be a blessed light. I feel I know his standing well; his utterances want simplicity and spirituality. He knows Jesus as "the Christ," but not yet as "the Lord," so it seems to me. Hence he lingers in the letter of the Gospel history; he does not mount up into the heavens with St. Paul, and commune with the Lord of Glory, in communion with whom the earthly history is known in its boundless and blessed significance.[1]

(3) It may be that our scribe belonged to that class which it has been customary for some time to speak of as *honest doubters*. That such exist within the Church in hundreds to-day we all know. Spurgeon has some rather contemptuous words about "honest doubt." What has "honest doubt" done for the world? What churches has it built? What nations has it founded? What hospitals has it built? What battles has it won? No; "honest doubt" has done none of these things, and perhaps there was need of the bold preacher's utterance at a time when "honest doubt" was being coddled almost to death. But we should ever remember that if "honest doubt" has done none of these things, it has done one thing, and that the grandest of all. It has made men. The great men of faith were all at one time "honest doubters." Christ therefore loves the "honest doubter." He says to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God"; only, remember you are not in. Your honest doubt won't save you. Men have asked, "Is doubt a sin?" No; doubt is not a sin, but doubt is a disease. And no man was ever saved by a disease. That great doubters have been saved I doubt not, but it was not their doubts that saved them. They were saved by the faith that "lived" in their "honest doubts."

¶ A newspaper writer recently described a strange habit that seamen have of visiting a famous city without landing. He said: I spoke with the mate of a ship one day at Venice, and asked him how he liked the city. Well, he had not been ashore yet. He was told that he had better go ashore; that the Piazza San Marco was worth seeing. Well, he knew it, he had seen pictures of it; but he thought that he wouldn't go ashore. Why not, now he was here? Well, he laid out to go ashore the next time he came to Venice. So he lay three weeks with his ship, after a voyage of two months, and sailed away without even setting his foot on that

[1] R. W. Corbett, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 40.

enchanted ground. How many, after crossing troubled seas of doubt and conflict, and finding themselves in the very haven of rest, yet hesitate to take the last step and possess the land. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God." Leave behind you the salt, estranging sea; be no more tossed to and fro; plant your feet on the smiling shore, walk its streets of gold, wear its white raiment, share its beauty and joy.[1]

(4) *Perhaps he was not willing to profess himself openly a disciple of Christ* and accept all that this would involve. He may have lacked the persistence of Nicodemus, who, though afraid of the Jews, yet came "by night" to be instructed in the way of the Kingdom. "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This was at first a hard saying to Nicodemus, but there is every reason to believe that he did commit himself more and more to Christ in newness of life; but, in so far as we have traces or glimpses of his history in the Gospels up to the time of the resurrection of Christ, he shows the same timid shrinking temper which brought him to Jesus under cover of darkness. The resurrection, being the seal and crown of all our Lord's earthly work, and the signal for the coming of the illuminating and strengthening Spirit, had a wonderful effect on the disciples generally, and it may have been the occasion of the complete confirmation of Nicodemus in the faith of Christ.

Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
Thy Spirit's course in me restrain?
Or undismay'd in deed and word,
Be a true witness to my Lord?

Awed by a mortal's frown, shall I
Conceal the Word of God most high?
How then before Thee shall I dare
To stand, or how Thy anger bear?

No; let man rage! since Thou wilt spread
Thy shadowing wings around my head:
Since in all pain Thy tender love
Will still my sweet refreshment prove.[2]

¶ There is a picture in stone which is enshrined in one of our cathedrals. It is the monument of one of England's

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] George Whitefield.

noblest bishops, the great and self-sacrificing Selwyn. Above the sarcophagus, which is of white marble, there is a recumbent figure of the great missionary, with a beautiful, placid countenance and the hands folded crosswise upon his breast. But the most beautiful thing of all is a window—a cross-shaped window—which is filled with crimson glass. It is so placed that when the noontide sun falls upon it, it throws the shadow of a blood-stained cross on the breast and face of the noble bishop beneath. It is, one feels, the truest epitaph that could be written of him. His life was made beautiful by the Cross. And so, if we are able to take that farther step which leads us into the Gethsemane of sacrifice, we shall not regret it. We shall come to feel with growing assurance and joy that our lives never truly touch completeness till they touch the Cross.[1]

Why wilt thou thus engage thy mind,
My Master said, and fall behind?
What matters it to thee,
Whate'er their whispering be?
Come on and leave their talk alone:
Stand like a tower firm, whose crown
Its summit never vails
For all the whistling gales.[2]

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay.

[2] Dante, *Purg.* v. 10–15 (tr. by Paget Toynbee).

All that She Had.

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ALL THAT SHE HAD.

And he sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they which are casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.—xii. 41–44.

THIS beautiful incident, as recorded by the evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke, is immediately followed by Christ's prophecy of the overthrow of the Temple. We have before us a picture-study in contrasts.

1. *A scene Within the Temple.*—It occurred in the Women's Court, where the Treasury, or the thirteen brazen chests, popularly known as "the Trumpets," were kept. The offerings cast at certain seasons into these "Trumpets" were devoted mainly to the maintenance of the sacred building and to defraying the expenses of Divine worship. To this fund every pious Jew was expected to contribute. Before the birth of Christ a movement had been inaugurated by Herod the Great for the completion and adornment of the Temple, and the furtherance of this work of national piety was regarded as a patriotic as well as a religious duty. This public giving was part of the established routine of the holy place, and the publicity of it was, no doubt, calculated upon as a spur to generosity. The religious Jew of those days was not above parading his good deeds, and if he gave a handsome sum to the Temple fund he preferred to do it in the presence of admiring spectators and with a certain amount of dramatic effect. Those rich men had no idea that the eyes of "the Judge of quick and dead" were resting upon them. And this, of course, is quite as true of the

poor widow, concerning whom our Lord spoke those penetrating words of appreciation and foresight, as it was of the self-satisfied givers of large sums.

2. *The Temple from Without.*—We in these days of modern civilisation, and with our colder northern temperament, can perhaps scarcely realise the pride and glory of the Jewish heart in that wonderful structure. It was associated with the antiquity of their nation, and seemed to stand like a visible link connecting them with their glorious forefathers of the olden time. Around it clustered all those emotions of patriotism which burned so fiercely in the Hebrew nature; while with its awful Holy of Holies and mystic altars, it became the symbol of the sublime worship of the one Jehovah which had for ages made their nation stand in lonely pre-eminence as the single witness for the true Lord of men. So that the trinity of emotions—Nationality, Patriotism, Devotion—which marked the national character of the Jews, were all centred on that Temple at Jerusalem.

In the disciples these feelings must have existed, but they had become softened, and in one sense deepened, by the influence of the Saviour. The grandeur of the Temple had excited the awe and wonder of their boyhood, but their associations with it had been strengthened by the change wrought in them through the companionship of Christ. He had told them of the Father in heaven; and as they worshipped before the veil that hid the burning glory, His house became more truly the house of God. He had told them of a Kingdom of heaven; and as they heard on the great feast days the Psalms of David rolling through its archways, they must have felt more than ever that that kingdom was near. So that on that evening, as they were going out with Christ to the Mount of Olives, and the gold and marble of the Temple shone resplendent in the setting sun, it was most natural that their enthusiasm should burst forth in the admiring cry—"Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

3. These two pictures taken together present a significant contrast. While the disciples were wondering at the majestic carved stone-work as a great offering dedicated by man to God, Christ had seen in the trembling gift of the widow an offering

equally great in the eye of heaven—the offering of a loyal heart. Others, too, had brought their offerings, gifts which in the world's eye might even be comparable to the glorious stones, while presumably this poor woman's offering had passed unnoticed save by the eyes of One in whose estimation she had brought "more than all." The stones of the Temple and the widow's heart! The disciples saw God's dwelling-place in the house of stone, with its Holy of Holies and altar of sacrifice; Christ saw it in the devoted heart of a widow. This idea characterised all His teaching; it is the inner motive and heart, as He constantly proclaimed, that God regards, and it is in the *spirit* that He must be served. "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." This poor woman, unknown and unnoticed except by the Divine eye, had come in her poverty, and had given *all she had* for God's service —*there* was the true altar of sacrifice.

¶ I asked an art critic why he did not consider a certain painting under observation a real work of art. He answered: It lacks enthusiasm. I think the artist who painted it was not enthusiastic and not positive enough. The result shows in a painting which just misses being good.[1]

4. She was simply one of a crowd, and as uninteresting and unpromising probably as are the members of any crowd; but the fact that she was, outwardly at least, uninteresting, makes it interesting that Christ was interested in her, and it is one of the features of our Lord's character that He was impressed by unpromising people. Whoever it might be that He was dealing with He seemed to feel that He had a good deal to go upon. No one, we should say, appeared to Him ordinary. We cannot fail to have been struck with what must have seemed to us the apparently haphazard way in which He selected His disciples. It would seem as though any one whom He ran across, as He was walking along the edge of the Sea of Galilee, would answer well enough for a disciple, and so for an apostle—not, be it understood, as a disparagement of the position which He selected

[1] E. W. Wilcox.

them to fill, but as a recognition that even "common" men were so uncommon as to be inherently able to fill the position. He could doubtless have continued His walk along the seaside and have selected another twelve just as competent as the first twelve, if He had cared at that time to have so many. And certainly it is not venturing much to presume that He could have come into any of our cities and congregations, and have found a dozen people with natural qualifications that would have made them as capable as Peter, James, and John, and the rest, to lay, in co-operation with Himself, the foundations of the Christian Church.

> The moon and the stars are commonplace things,
> And the flower that blooms and the bird that sings;
> But dark were the world and sad our lot
> If the flowers failed and the sun shone not;
> And God, who studies each separate soul,
> Out of commonplace lives makes His beautiful whole.[1]

The subject may conveniently be treated in two parts:

I. *Christ's Unerring Judgment.*

II. *Opportunity and Responsibility.*

I

Christ's Unerring Judgment.

1. There is not so much difference between a bat's eye and an eagle's as there is between the insight, as we call it, of ordinary men and *the insight of Jesus.* The whole universe and every detail of it becomes changed to our eyes directly we catch a glimpse of any part from the standpoint of Jesus Christ How tawdry are the pomps and the magnificences which we admire, and how splendid are the lowly eternities which we despise.

¶ A public meeting was held at a certain English town in the interests of Foreign Missions. The chairman was reading out a list of donors. "Mr. So-and-So, a hundred guineas." Tremendous cheering. "Mr. So-and-So, £50." Great cheering. "Mr. So-

[1] Susan Coolidge.

and-So, £20." Much cheering. "Mr. So-and-So, 6d." No cheering. Not being pleased at this cool reception of a gift which probably cost as much sacrifice, or possibly more than any of the foregoing, the chairman, amidst breathless silence, exclaimed: "Hush, I think I hear the clapping of the pierced hands." The audience keenly felt the rebuke.[1]

So with the Lord: He takes and He refuses,
Finds Him ambassadors whom men deny,
Wise ones nor mighty for his saints He chooses,
No, such as John or Gideon or I.

He as He wills shall solder and shall sunder,
Slay in a day and quicken in an hour,
Tune Him a music from the Sons of Thunder,
Forge and transform my passion into power.[2]

2. *The beauty of the poor widow's act*, commended by our Lord, lay in its entire *unconsciousness of self*, and of the moral value of what she was doing. We all see that both the moral and the æsthetic quality of her act would have sunk to a much lower level if she had known that the eyes of the promised Messiah of her race were upon her, or that her modest offering would be spoken of in distant climes and future ages wherever the story of man's redemption should be told. In that case the elements of calculation and of reward would have mingled with her motives.

¶ It matters not what we seem to be to ourselves or others, but only how God looks upon us when we pray to Him. This you may take as the test and proof of anything you say, do, or think; and of the real importance of any event that happens to you: What difference does it make when you come to appear before God in prayer? Will it render you more acceptable or not? Let any one notice each day—there can be no better rule or safeguard—what will render him in his hours of prayer most acceptable with God. There can be no better standard or measure of the real value of all things than this.

I thank Thee I am not my own,
But have to live in Thee alone,
Each passing day, each passing hour,
To live in Thy great power.
Whate'er to-day, to-morrow brings,
'Tis all Thine Hand, Thine orderings.[3]

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul*. [3] *Ibid.*

3. *The extravagance of love.*—It undoubtedly was an imprudent thing for a woman to do, for perhaps at a later hour of the same day she was unable to meet the necessities of her subsistence; but a beautiful intention we like all the better if it is not too careful and too calculating. Her act is like that of Mary when she broke her alabaster cruse and poured the costly spikenard on her Saviour's head. If Mary had been more economical with the spikenard less of its fragrance might have floated down to our own day. Both acts were extravagant and reckless, but their very recklessness is one of their charms.

¶ I was preaching a missionary sermon in the village of L'Original, in the province of Quebec, to a congregation of forty. A student who was with me pointed out an old Roman Catholic lady who had come to hear the missionary sermon. My subject was "China and her need." At the close of the sermon this lady rose and left the building. I feared that I had said something which gave her offence. But while we were singing the last hymn she returned, walked to the front of the church and handed a piece of money to the steward, who afterwards told me what she said, and they were precious words. "Take that and give it to that man for China, and may God bless him and save the heathen. I only have thirty cents, five of which I brought with me for collection, but when I heard of China's need I thought I would go home and get the twenty-five cents and give it, and keep the five cents for myself." I shall ever see in that old lady, whose name is unknown to me, a facsimile of that "certain poor widow" casting her two mites into the treasury, and I believe that the word of commendation from the Christ will be no less in the one case than in the other.[1]

In the long run all love is paid by love,
  Though undervalued by the hosts of earth;
The great eternal government above
  Keeps strict account and will redeem its wo th.
Give thy love freely; do not count the cost;
So beautiful a thing is never lost
    In the long run.[2]

4. Another thought which the story told by the Evangelist may suggest to us is that *each single life is an offertory*, a contribution, made to the great sum of human influences and examples. Every day, in our business and in our time of

[1] G. I. Campbell. [2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

leisure, by the words we speak, by the force of our example, direct or indirect, by the unconscious revelations we make of our true selves, by the standards we apply to our own conduct and that of our fellow-men, by the opinions we express, the aims we pursue, the moral principles we support or discourage, we are casting something of our own into that invisible treasury which will abide there as a witness for or against us.

¶ Some faint resemblance to this idea of a common treasury to which all in their several ways contribute may be seen in the demands and expectations of men and women when united in social groups. What the writers of the New Testament call "the world" has its own code of unwritten laws, together with its own peculiar sanctions. If you desire to stand well with "people in society" you must contribute something towards the general stock of comfort, of pleasure, or of amusement—something that ordinary minds, not overburdened with intelligence, can appreciate. Either you must be rich, and spend your money freely in lavish entertainments, in which case much will be forgiven you; or you must have a reputation for being clever; or you must have done something remarkable; or you must possess the happy knack of saying or doing the right thing in awkward situations. In one way or another, by self-assertion or by tact and adroitness, you must prove yourself to be an important social unit, and then you may count upon your special contribution to the world's treasury being stamped with approval. The unpardonable offence is to be a cipher, to stand for nothing that a materialised society values or cares for. It is in this way that the vulgarised minds interpret the Gospel precepts, "Give, and it shall be given to you." "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." The rich and powerful are welcome as the "benefactors" of society, and society rewards them with its smiles. Modest and humble goodness may pass by with its slender offering, rich only in the coin of love and self-sacrifice, but such coinage has no appreciable value in the eyes of the "children of this world." They are not concerned to ask whether your motives are pure and disinterested or whether your so-called "charity" is but a form of self-advertisement. All they care to know is how much you are able to give as your solid contribution to the material wealth and enjoyment of this life, which are, in their judgment, the only things that have any real value.[1]

[1] J. W. Shepard.

II.

Opportunity and Responsibility.

i. The Value of Sacrifice.

Christ had looked on the woman who, with her heart bowed in desolation and sorrow, had given her *all* to God, and He declared that, small as that was in itself, it was the truest and greatest offering that could be made. Here we find a great principle. The greatness of the outward act of surrender is nothing,—the perfectness of the inner spirit is alone of value in the eye of God. This is a truth which we seldom fully realise, and yet it is one which, if realised, would transform our whole life. We are perpetually prone to measure sacrifice by the outward appearance, while Christ points to the least act which is done with the surrender of the heart's life as the greatest sacrifice of all. Doubtless this is partly because the external greatness of a sacrifice gratifies our self-glorying spirit —we like to do a thing which *seems* to be a great dedication, and which flatters our self-love by its greatness. Or it is partly because it is far easier to us to do a great thing which does not necessitate self-surrender than to do a small thing which demands it. We call it a great thing, and rightly so, to spend a life in toilsome service, to give up home and friends and live in strange lands, forgetting that this may not involve more sacrifice than patiently to bear our lot, wherever it may be, than to perform the constant but unnoticed self-denials of an obscure life, and accept without murmuring the unknown and unrewarded toils of each day. This tendency pervades all our judgments. We judge men's acts by their outward forms rather than by the spirit which impelled them — we are so apt to regard only the great Temple stones. The principle uttered by Christ with regard to the widow's gift reverses our common notions; before it, our distinctions between great and small vanish. It is the *all—the very heart* of the offerer that God asks for, the outward form of the sacrifice is of little worth. There are many unknown heroes and silent martyrs now whom the world passes by. It is not the great outward act, but the

perfect yielding of the soul, that constitutes the sacrifice which God will not despise.

In the worship described in the vision in the Apocalypse "the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat upon the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne" (Rev. iv. 10). They lay their crowns, the symbol of their attainments, at the feet of Him that sitteth upon the throne; and while these glorified saints are thus offering themselves in delighted homage in heaven amidst surroundings that tell of perfect joy and peace, some poor struggling Christian upon earth has broken away with tears and an aching heart from what he loves most, that he may do more thoroughly what he believes to be the will of God. The principle that moves both is the same—*sacrifice and self-oblation*; only here the will is being purified and cleansed, loosening itself with pain from the creatures to which it clings inordinately, that in faith, and often with little sensible love, it may give itself to God. There, in that picture in heaven, we see the result; there is no more need of struggle or effort, the will is free, bound for ever into the will of God, and it is the joy of the soul for eternity to cast itself and all it possesses at the feet of its Creator.

"What can I spare?" we say:
"Ah, this and this,
From mine array
I am not like to miss:
And here are crumbs to feed some hungry one:
They do but grow a cumbrance on my shelf":—
And yet, one reads, our Father gave His Son,
Our Master gave Himself.[1]

ii. The Sacrifice of our Substance.

St. Paul says, "We are not our own, we are bought with a price"; therefore, strictly speaking, we have nothing to give, and yet it is true that Christ, who gives us all, condescends to receive back our gifts. Observe, however, how our Lord receives them, observe how He passes judgment on those who cast their gifts into His treasury. He does not condemn the rich who

[1] Frederick Langbridge.

that day brought their offerings. He does not say how much they ought to have given, whether or not they ought to have given more; but He makes no honourable mention of them. One of the evils of our day is an ostentatious parade of what rich persons give for charitable and religious purposes. This kind of parade is in direct opposition to our Lord's conduct on the occasion before us. He did not call the attention of the disciples to what He saw till this poor widow had cast in her two mites. The sums which the rich men gave are not named at all. How unlike is this precious passage in New Testament history to what is too common in modern reports, where the larger sums, with their donors' names, are specified first, and then the lesser ones are massed in one amount under the head of *small sums*!

Christ sees the workman's sixpence, and how much it is in relation to his weekly wages. The subscription of a thousand pounds from "many who are rich" is not, in His eyes, half so much. The offerings of the very poor make a deep impression on His heart. He specially calls the attention of the disciples to the greatness of least gifts. He excites their reverence and wonder by speaking of a poor widow who had cast in "more than all." To the treasury of the Temple her offering was next to nothing, but it was very great in the sight of God. How easily and reasonably she might have said, "My two mites are much to me, but they will not make the treasury noticeably richer: I will keep them for my own need"; instead of which, she kept her need, and gave her money, *all that she had.* And Jesus has built her an eternal monument: *she cast in more than they all.*

¶ "Poor widow" indeed! but in a sense quite different from that in which Christ uses the words. Her name is unknown, her deed immortal, but verily she hath been made a packhorse for more stinginess than any other character of history. Surely we may well be thankful that her name is not known, else we would have had societies bearing it while belying her character. We talk about our "mite," of course referring to her, and there is no near relationship between the two. She did not foretell, or aftertell, what she gave. We do both. She gave two mites, we give what we call a mite—and generally speaking it is, but not much like the widow's. "She of her want did cast in all

that she had, even all her living"; but we of our superfluity cast in what we happen to have with us or feel like giving, and this is a mite, but rarely all our living. Usually it does not affect our living in the least.

"I would my gift were worthier!" sighed the Greek,
As on he goaded to the temple-door
His spotted bullock. "Ever of our store
Doth Zeus require the best; and fat and sleek
The ox I vowed to him (no brindled streak,
No fleck of dun) when through the breaker's roar
He bore me safe that day, to Naxos' shore;
And now, my gratitude, how seeming weak!
But here be chalk-pits. What if I should white
The blotches, hiding all unfitness so?
The victim in the people's eyes would show
Better therefor;—the sacrificial rite
Be quicklier granted at thus fair a sight,
And the great Zeus himself might never know."

We have a God who knows. And yet we dare
On His consuming altar-coals to lay
(Driven by the prick of conscience to obey)
The whited sacrifice, the hollow prayer,
In place of what we vowed, in our despair,
Of best and holiest;—glad no mortal may
Pierce through the cheat, and hoping half to stay
That Eye before whose search all souls are bare!

Nay, rather;—let us bring the victim-heart,
Defiled, unworthy, blemished though it be,
And fling it on the flame, entreating,—"See,
I blush to know how vile in every part
Is this my gift, through sin's delusive art,
Yet 'tis the best that I can offer Thee!"[1]

iii. The Sacrifice of Ourselves.

1. What do we mean by the word *ourselves*? Christ has said, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for

[1] Margaret J. Preston.

his life?" This, then, is what we mean by *ourselves*: our time, our talents, our desires, our affections, in short, all that which makes up our life; and Christ has taught us that nothing short of *ourselves* is an offering worthy of Him. This may be called the *ideal* way of looking at the subject.

¶ "Two mites, which make a farthing." Is that merely the Evangelist's explanation, or is he quoting Christ? It would have been like Him to give the equation; for no one reckons as He the value of human love. She had *two mites*. Had she had the farthing in one piece it might have been different; but while there are two pieces there is always room for a double heart. It is not in money only that we are tempted to halve with God. Our talents, our time, our love, our conscience—let us keep half and give God the other![1]

I beheld Him
Bleeding on the accursed tree:
Heard Him pray, "Forgive them, Father!"
And my wistful heart said faintly,
"Some of self, and some of Thee!"

¶ I once read a book which suggested that the words, "My Master," should be worn next the heart, next the will, sinking into the very springs of both, deeper every day. The writer says: "Let us get up every morning with this for the instantaneous thought that my Master wakes me. I wake, I rise, His property. Before I go out to plow, or feed, or whatever it may be, upon His domain, let me, with reverent and deep joy, go into His private chamber, as it were, and avow Him as my Master, my Possessor; absolute, not constitutional; supremely entitled to order me about all day, and, if He pleases, not to thank me at the close."[2]

¶ That He had always been governed by love without selfish views; and that having resolved to make the love of God the *end* of all his actions, he had found good reason to be well satisfied with his method. That he was pleased, when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of God, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.[3]

2. Three practical lessons arise.

(1) *A lesson of duty.*—We are so tempted to say, "Had we only great opportunities of service, were we only free from these passing cares, we would dedicate our lives to God." Meanwhile

[1] H. Elvet Lewis. [2] D. Farncomb, *The Vision of His Face*, 70.
[3] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 8.

this wonderful life is passing, never to return, and nothing is done. Every man may be spiritually heroic. Beneath every trouble or disappointment, small and insignificant as they may seem, lies God's opportunity.

¶ Believe that the work you are appointed to do is God's work, and you will always find scope for the heavenly spirit, and for living out the principle which Christ indicated when He pointed to the widow's mite. It is true that this makes life a very difficult thing,—it is supremely hard to live to God in small things. But forget not that He who saw the widow's offering sees you, and He who guides the stars binds up the broken heart.[1]

¶ There is a great deal in the Bible about things we might be inclined to call "trifles." I think God wants to remind us at every turn that He is carefully taking note of all the little details of life. Nearly two thousand years ago a man was doing a lowly act of service—just carrying a pitcher of water into a house in Jerusalem. How little he thought, as he walked along the street, that this trifling everyday action would never be forgotten. How little he imagined that God was weaving him and his pitcher into the most wonderful story the world has ever known. Two of the Evangelists mention that man, who was doing a servant's work, just before the greatest of the Jewish Passovers was kept, as if they wished to impress us with God's attention to common things. They may seem trifling to us, but nothing is trifling to Him.[2]

¶ Jesus hath many lovers of His Heavenly Kingdom, but few bearers of His cross. He hath many desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation. All desire to rejoice with Him; few are willing to endure anything for Him or with Him. But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.[3]

¶ That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, for He regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.[4]

(2) *A lesson of encouragement.*—Live to God in *all* things—consider no sacrifice too great or too small—do your best in everything as in His sight, and you will find Him everywhere. "The trivial round, the common task," will be glorified with a

[1] E. L. Hull. [2] D. Farncomb, *The Vision of His Face*, 99.
[3] Thomas à Kempis.
[4] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 22.

heavenly spirit, and the great stones in God's temple of the world will shine with the radiance of Divinity. Thus you will be revealing the Divine life to the world. Men and women consecrated to God in all things are the living temples of the Lord, through which His presence is manifested. Ask not, "Where is my work in the battle of the ages?" It is there, close to your side, if "whatsoever your hand finds to do, you do it with your might."

¶ "He called unto him his disciples." Why did He not call the widow also? His "well done" would have transfigured her whole life. Christ values the deed, and the soul that shines through it, too highly to spoil them by praising too soon. He keeps His "well done" till we are fit to hear it. Who can tell the patience of His love? the self-restraint of His sympathy? There must be many a weary servant of His, with disappointed hands and bleeding heart, who almost wins Him to divulge, too soon, the healing secret of "that great day," but He is wise, and longsuffering, hushing the whispers of heaven lest they reach our ears too soon. He let her return into the shadow of her lonely life and win her obscure victories in the strength of her own soul; some morning, when the angels hear, He will say—"I saw it." And she will only bow her head lower, in adoring wonder. The soldier must come home for his medal; the worker must wait till evening for his wages. What He gives now is a sense of peace within, a feeling of victory over self.[1]

> It is enough! With Him no good is lost;
> All has its own just value: All the cost—
> The sacrifice by which our work is done—
> Revealed before Him stand:
> Already in His hand
> The fragments have been gathered into one.[2]

(3) *A lesson of warning.*—The Jews had come to see God only in the Temple at Jerusalem. As a consequence they became *formalists*—the surrender of their souls was forgotten, and the splendid Temple fell! So now and ever; forget the Divinity of all life, and the temple of your soul will become desolate.[3] A service which is merely formal becomes degrading; it seeks a reward outside itself. But when Christ fills the temple of the soul, all service is based on love and brings its own reward.

[1] H. Elvet Lewis.

[2] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 137.

[3] E. L. Hull.

¶ Love is the greatest thing that God can give us, for Himself is Love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to God, for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. Let our love be firm, constant, and inseparable; not coming and returning like the tide, but descending like a never-failing river, ever running into the ocean of Divine excellency, passing on in the channels of duty and a constant obedience, and never ceasing to be what it is, till it comes to what it desires to be; still being a river till it be turned into a sea, and vastness, even the immensity of a blessed eternity.[1]

I into life so full of love was sent,
    That all the shadows which fall on the way
    Of every human being could not stay,
But fled before the light my spirit lent.

They said, "You are too jubilant and glad;
    The world is full of sorrow and of wrong,
    Full soon your lips shall breathe forth sighs—not song!"
The days wear on, and yet I am not sad.

They said, "Too free you give your soul's rare wine;
    The world will quaff, but it will not repay."
    Yet into the emptied flagons, day by day,
True hearts pour back a nectar as divine.

Thy heritage! Is it not love's estate?
    Look to it, then, and keep its soil well tilled.
    I hold that my best wishes are fulfilled,
Because I love so much, and will not hate.[2]

[1] Jeremy Taylor. [2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

A Ministering Woman and a Grateful Saviour.

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A MINISTERING WOMAN AND A GRATEFUL SAVIOUR.

She hath done what she could.—xiv. 8.

1. THE pathetic story of the woman and the alabaster box of ointment is related by three out of the four Evangelists by way of introduction to the record of the Passion of Christ. It has always kept a peculiarly strong hold upon Christian thought and sentiment, partly because of the beauty and pathos and unique character of the incident itself, partly because the woman's act won for her a commendation such as no other person ever received from Him, when He declared that her story should be told throughout the whole world wherever His Gospel should be preached.

¶ We have a word in our language called "unction." It signifies thorough devotedness and enthusiasm of heart, incited by the outpouring of God's Spirit; and it effects spiritually what the ointment poured over the body does naturally. Unction and the act of anointing, in their primary meaning, are the same. Mary's anointing of our Lord was figurative of the unction of her own heart which led her to break the alabaster vase, and scatter its perfumes round. There are many others who, like her, in the unction and devotion of their hearts, have their vase to break, and their perfume to shed around. Do not, then, coldly scorn in the present that which you applaud in the past.[1]

2. The incident was the very beginning of the end. The public ministry of our Lord closes with the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew: "When Jesus had finished all these words, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified" (Matt. xxvi. 1, 2). Then the Evangelist lets us look forth from

[1] J. C. M. Bellew.

the quiet home in Bethany to see the dreadful forces that are at work. "Then were gathered together the chief priests, and the elders of the people, unto the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas; and they took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him."

3. The darkness of that hour begins to creep over Him with its exceeding sorrow. He looks upon the disciples and sighs—they all are to be offended because of Him. There is Peter, who shall deny his Lord thrice. There is Judas, counting up how much he can make out of his Master. And Jesus with all His sensitiveness, shrinking from that awful loneliness, looks into the deep dark gulf that yawned at His feet. Is there no love that discerns His grief; no tender sympathy that makes haste to minister to it? The disciples are stunned and bewildered by His words; and they are afraid to ask Him what they mean. Martha is busy about the housework; so large a company arriving from Jerusalem needs much providing for. She wishes Mary were more handy and useful. And Mary sits and sees it all with the clear sight of her great love. Her Lord must go to be betrayed! *He must die!* And she, what can she do?

One thing she has—it had been a treasure, but her great love sees it now as poor indeed—an alabaster box of very precious unguent. And now she comes hiding her gift, and hastens to the side of her Lord, and ventures reverently to pour it on His head.

Judas frowned, and said what others thought, "What waste!" To these simple fishermen it was a fortune, enough to keep a poor man's household for a year. And, adds St. Mark, "they were angry with her," and their murmurings broke out on every side. Poor Mary! condemned by these indignant looks and words, she sank down beside her Lord and hid her face afraid. Was He angry with her? Was her love so clumsy that it but added to His grief? No, indeed, His hand is lovingly laid upon her. He saw her meaning. "Let her alone," said He; "why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. She hath done what she could: she hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying."[1]

¶ *She hath done what she could.* She never preached; she never wrought any wonderful work; she never built a church, or

[1] Mark Guy Pearse.

endowed a hospital, or founded a mission. What then hath she done? She hath loved her Lord with a deep, tender devotion that gladdened and strengthened and comforted Him. He who is love sets most store by love. Love that delights in Him; love that communes with Him; love that is ever seeking to bring Him its best and richest; love that finds its heaven in His pleasure, its hell in His grief, its all in His service; love that blesses Him with adoring joy for His great love; that rests triumphantly in His presence, and wanders restlessly if He be gone—this is to Him earth's richest gift.[1]

The subject is a Ministering Woman and a Grateful Saviour. The text contains these three topics:—I. *Our Lord's Recognition of Mary's Service*; II. *The Character of Mary's Service*; III. *The Perfected Service of the Future Life.*

I.

Our Lord's Recognition of Mary's Service.

1. This saying, with the occasion of it, stands out as one of the most noticeable among the few instances, each of them strongly and distinctly marked, on which our Lord vouchsafed to utter words of personal praise to individuals in their own hearing. There are some ten or twelve such instances, five of which relate to women, and two of the five to Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus. Of her, in her hearing, Christ had said some time before, "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Now He says: "She hath wrought a good work on me. She hath done what she could. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." O blessed woman! To be so spoken of by Him who shall come to be her Judge, the Judge of us all! To be assured out of His own mouth that she was not deceiving herself, that the part which she was professing to have chosen was really the good part! That she had really chosen it, and that it should never be taken away from her!

[1] Mark Guy Pearse.

What would any one of us poor uncertain backsliders give to be quite sure of having pleased our Lord in but one action of our lives; as sure as Mary of Bethany was in pouring the ointment on His head?

Could I have sung one Song that should survive
The singer's voice, and in my country's heart
Find loving echo—evermore a part
Of all her sweetest memories; could I give
One great Thought to the People, that should prove
The spring of noble action in their hour
Of darkness, or control their headlong power
With the firm reins of Justice and of Love;
Could I have traced one Form that should express
The sacred mystery that underlies
All Beauty; and through man's enraptured eyes
Teach him how beautiful is Holiness,—
I had not feared thee. But to yield my breath,
Life's Purpose unfulfilled!—This is thy sting, O Death![1]

2. "That which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Mary had been attacked and needed defence. It was not the first time that her actions had been criticised. Before, it had been her own sister who found fault, now it was Judas Iscariot, backed up by some other or others of the disciples; but both times it was the same kind of censure, though passed on her by very different persons, and with very different intentions. There was plausibility enough in what they alleged to disturb a mind in the least degree scrupulous. What sort of devotion is this, which leaves a sister to serve alone? which lays out on ointments and perfumes, offered to Him who needs them not, a sum of money which might go a good way in feeding the hungry or clothing the naked? Who can say that there is nothing in such a remonstrance? But He that searches the hearts interfered,—as He never fails to do sooner or later, on behalf of His humble and meek ones,—and spoke out words of wisdom and power which have settled the matter for ever to her and to the whole Church. Twice He spoke: once to the traitor and once to those whom the traitor was misleading. To Judas apart, Do *thou* "let her alone.

[1] Sir Noël Paton.

Against the day of my burying hath she kept this"; by His manner and look as well as His words, speaking to what was in His betrayer's conscience, and startling him, it may be, with the thought, "Surely this thing is known." To the rest, "Let her alone: why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me": to all, "For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always."

He whom no praise can reach, is aye
Men's least attempts approving:
Whom Justice makes All-merciful,
Omniscience makes All-loving.

Yes, they have caught the way of God
To whom Self lies displayed
In such clear vision as to cast
O'er others' faults a shade.

A bright horizon out to sea
Obscures the distant ships:—
Rough hearts look smooth and beautiful
In Charity's Eclipse.[1]

3. What, then, is the lesson or true import of this so much commended example? What but this?—do for Christ just what is closest at hand, and be sure that thus you will meet all His remotest or most unknown times and occasions. Or, better still, follow without question the impulse of *love to Christ's own person*; for this, when really full and sovereign, will make your conduct chime, as it were, naturally with all God's future.

It is on personality that religion rests. This is why Jesus Christ, building Christianity upon Himself, commended Mary's act of loving self-devotion. Had He merely taught the philosophy of religion—had He simply inculcated, however persuasively, the principles of theism and morality, warning men against vice and painting bright pictures of virtue—He would have been no more than one of those many teachers who have enlightened but not saved the world. But He was more than a teacher, more than a philosopher; He was a

[1] F. W. Faber.

living and loving Person, the magnet of the human soul, drawing men irresistibly to Himself.

¶ St. Paul says, "To me to live is Christ." There are those who affect to think that so long as the principles and moral ideas of religion are well understood and clearly enforced, and the general tone of society has a colouring of Christianity, the person of Christ may be allowed, without much loss, to fall into the background. Such a belief seems to take little account of the actual facts of human life, or of the way in which experience shows that character is usually influenced and developed. Philosophy, after all, is not enough to save men; what they know to be right, it does not follow (as even the Roman poet saw) that they will straightway go and do; for persons, far more than principles or ideas, move us both to good and to evil. "Ideas," says George Eliot, "are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in their vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft, responsive hand, they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame." What men need to help them is the force of personality, the example of wife or husband or friend, the sight and touch of another person, human like themselves, yet still hoping, still aspiring, still rising on the stepping-stones of a dead past. Persons, not principles, count for most in the great struggle.[1]

¶ Do you say with a sigh, "Oh, if I had nothing to do but just to be with Christ personally, and have my duty solely as with Him, how sweet and blessed and secret and free would it be!" Well, you may have it so; exactly this you may do and nothing more. Come, then, to Christ, retire into the secret place of His love, and have your whole duty personally as with Him. Then you will make this very welcome discovery, that as you are personally given up to Christ's person, you are going where He goes, helping what He does, keeping ever dear bright company with Him in all His motions of good and sympathy, refusing even to let Him suffer without suffering with Him. And so you will do a great many more duties than you even think of now; only they will all be sweet and easy and free, even as your love is. You will stoop low, and bear the load of many, and be the

S. A. Alexander.

servant of all, but it will be a secret joy that you have with your Master personally. You will not be digging out points of conscience, and debating what your duty is to this or that, or him or her, or here or yonder; indeed, you will not think that you are doing much for Christ at all—not half enough—and yet He will be saying to you every hour in sweetest approbation, "Ye did it unto me."[1]

4. In praising Mary's act, Christ not only accepts her personal service, but through her He graciously accepts and welcomes the service of women. From the very beginning of the Gospel, our gracious Master has condescended to make use of *women's work* in preparing men's hearts for His Kingdom, and in promoting it when the time came. It is observable how from time to time, doubtless not without a special providence, women were selected to be His agents on occasions for new steps to be taken, new doors to be opened in the progress and diffusion of His marvellous mercy. Thus when He would shew Himself to the Samaritans, half heathen as they were, and prepare them for the coming of His Spirit, He drew a certain woman to Jacob's well, and caused her to inquire of Him the best way and place of worship. Thus a woman was His first messenger to that remarkable people, though He afterwards sent His Evangelist to convert and His Apostles to confirm them. To a woman was given, in reward of her faith and humility, the privilege of being the first to have revealed to her the healing—might we not say the sacramental?—virtue which abode in the very hem of His garment, to meet the touch of faith. Women, as far as we are told, were the first who had the honour allowed them of ministering to Him of their substance. In His last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, in His lodging at Bethany, on His way to Calvary, around His cross both before and after His death, beside His grave both before and after His resurrection, we all know what a part women took, and how highly they were favoured. The narrative in the Acts clearly implies that the Holy Spirit actually descending, found the women praying with the Apostles with one accord in one place, and made them partakers of Himself, sealing them with His

[1] Horace Bushnell.

blessings, variously, according to the various work He had prepared for them. Thenceforward the daughters as well as the sons began to prophesy, the handmaidens as well as the servants had the Spirit poured out upon them.

¶ It takes a woman disciple after all to do any most beautiful thing; in certain respects, too, or as far as love is wisdom, any wisest thing. Thus we have before us here a simple-hearted loving woman, who has had no subtle questions of criticism about matters of duty and right, but only loves her Lord's person with a love that is probably a kind of mystery to herself, which love she wants somehow to express.[1]

She brought her box of alabaster,
The precious spikenard filled the room
With honour worthy of the Master,
A costly, rare, and rich perfume.

O may we thus, like loving Mary,
Ever our choicest offerings bring,
Nor grudging of our toil, nor chary
Of costly service to our King.

Methinks I hear from Christian lowly
Some hallowed voice at eveniug rise,
Or quiet morn, or in the holy
Unclouded calm of Sabbath skies,—

I bring my box of alabaster,
Of earthly loves I break the shrine,
And pour affections, purer, vaster,
On that dear Head—those feet of Thine.

What though the scornful world, deriding
Such waste of love, of service, fears,
Still let me pour, through taunt and chiding,
The rich libation of my tears.

I bring my box of alabaster,—
Accepted let the offering rise!
So grateful tears shall flow the faster
In founts of gladness, from my eyes![2]

[1] Horace Bushnell.

[2] C. L. Ford, *Lyra Anglicana*, 24.

II.

The Character of Mary's Service.

Do we wonder why Christ selected Mary for this special praise? Evidently there was something about her action which touched His heart. We cannot but conclude that He set His mark upon it simply because *it was the expression of the deepest personal love towards Himself.*

A service which springs from love finds many outlets. Such service may be characterised in various ways.

1. *It is Spontaneous.*—No service is so beautiful as the spontaneous. We cannot subscribe to the doctrine that men are not to do good unless their heart is free to do it. Wesley called that "a doctrine of devils." We must do good when it goes against the grain, when our heart most vehemently protests. We must give when the coins are glued to our fingers, sacrifice when nature urges that we cannot afford it, forgive when we feel vindictive. Such service as this—unwilling, ungracious—God will not reject. But, after all, spontaneous service is the best—that which springs unforced, uncoerced, cheerfully from the heart.

¶ In the intellectual sphere we know that splendid masterpieces are unforced, unlaboured; they are marked by perfect ease and spontaneity. We feel sure that Shakespeare wrote the "Tempest" as a flower opens to the kiss of the sun; that Shelley wrote the "Skylark" freely as the bird itself sings from the cloud; that Mozart's music flowed from his mind as the wind makes music among the branches; that Turner's grand pictures sprang out of his brain as a rainbow springs out of a shower. Plodding workers, overcoming difficulties with determination and fag, do respectable and valuable work, but it is still true that the grandest works cost the least. The spontaneous is more than the correct, inspiration is more than elaboration, a fountain has a glory beyond a pump. Mary's act was of the sublimest: it came welling forth from the depths of her soul, born of a love of the purest, the divinest.[1]

Love much. There is no waste in freely giving,
More blessed is it, even, than to receive.
He who loves much alone finds life worth living;
Love on, through doubt and darkness; and believe
There is no thing which Love may not achieve.[2]

[1] J. Pearce. [2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Love and Life.*

2. *It is Self-Sacrificing.*—It is marvellous how vital contact with Jesus will bring out the best that is in man or woman. Mary had already loved the Master, for sitting at His feet she had chosen that good part which was not to be taken away from her. His power had stirred her life to its very depths. Can she express the gratitude that is flowing like a flood through her heart? Her act may well be called "the extravagance of gratitude." That the disciples considered it wastefully extravagant is proved by their criticism of her act, as the prosaic mind has always considered all great sacrifice.

But sincere gratitude is always utterly unreasonable. It will go to any length in seeking full expression. It never stops to reason concerning the wisdom of sacrifice. The cost of real sacrifice is never, can never, be counted. Its only question here is, "What can I do for Him who has done so much for me?"

In the cheaper meaning sacrifice is giving up; it is suffering it may be the suffering of real pain for some one or something. And this *is* sacrifice, let it be said. In the deeper, richer meaning there is suffering too; but that is only part; and, however keen and cutting, still the smaller part. Sacrifice is love purposely giving itself, regardless of the privation or pain involved, that thus more of life's sweets may come to another. Sacrifice is love meeting an emergency, and singing because able to meet and to grip it.

¶ A lady was calling upon a friend whose two children were brought in during the call. As they talked together the caller said eagerly, and yet with evidently no thought of the meaning of her words, "Oh! I'd give my life to have two such children." And the mother replied, with a subdued earnestness, whose quiet told of the depth of experience out of which her words came, "That's exactly what it costs." Yet there was a gleam of light in her eye, and a something in her manner, which told more plainly than words that though she had given much, she had gotten more, both in the possession of the children, and in the rare enrichment of her spirit.[1]

¶ Do we want an illustration of self-sacrificing love in our own time? We may fall abashed before the high-born, gifted, and admired English girl who came to Kaiserswerth as a pupil, and then reproduced the same wonders of consolation and healing for sick and destitute governesses, not amidst the rural quiet and

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 161.

sweet verdure of her own paternal home in Hampshire, but in a dismal street in London. Yet we ought all to remember that Florence Nightingale, too, *only did what she could*; that, if we do that, God's honours are impartial; that if we do not that, then ours is indeed the shame of the shortcoming. We follow this minister of angelic mercy along the horrid and bloody path of war to the banks of the Bosphorus, and read how, in the hospital of Scutari,

> Through miles of pallets, thickly laid
> With sickness in its foulest guise,
> And pain, in forms to have dismayed
> Man's science-hardened eyes,
>
> A woman, fragile, pale, and tall,
> Upon her saintly work doth move,
> Fair or not fair, who knows? but all
> Follow her face with love.

While I bow with reverent confession before this transcendent realised vision of celestial pity, I still believe we ought not to forget that God may have, that He asks, that He requires of us that there *shall be* servants of His love as self-denying, as heroic, as resolute, of whom hospital never knew and poetry never sang, here in these homely houses and these prosaic streets. For the hour will come when every soul that hath done what that soul could, shall be seen on the right hand of the throne of God.[1]

3. *It is Singular and Courageous.*—Mary's was a new type of ministry. The disciples had their own ways of ministering, which were more servile and stereotyped. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" Poor blind critics! They could see only one way in which money could be wisely expended—their eyes were holden. They needed an example like Mary's to make their scales fall. She was not indifferent to the necessities of the poor—but she was not tied down to just one way of doing good. She was original and creative, not slavishly imitative. She conceived a new way of serving Christ, and fearlessly carried out her programme. It was love—a warm heart—that made her thus inventive, and gave a note of distinction to her ministry. Love is always thoughtful and creative; it must strike out new paths for itself, must clothe itself in new forms. Love cannot be commonplace; it delights

[1] F. D. Huntington.

in innovations, surprises, singularities, felicities. It is impossible to put love in fetters, dictate its course, or rule it by convention. It stores away the vase until the opportune moment arrives for dispensing its contents—and then it confounds us with its goodness.

¶ It was early in September a good many years ago. The winter storms had begun early that year. One morning, after a wild night, Grace Darling heard human voices mingling with the voices of the storm. And going out, she saw a vessel on the rocks of the farthest island. What was she that she should bestir herself at such a time? A feeble girl, with the seeds of an early death at work on her already! But she roused her father and pointed out the wreck. Were the human beings clinging to it to be allowed to perish? The old man saw no help for them. He shrank from the entreaty of his daughter to go out to them. It seemed to him certain death to venture on such a sea. The brave girl leaped into the boat of the lighthouse and would go alone; and then the old man's courage was roused. And so, on the morning of that sixth day of September, those two, risking their lives for mercy, pulled through the tempest to the wreck. Nine human beings were there, in the very grasp of death. And these nine, one by one, this brave girl and her father, going and coming, rescued and carried to the lighthouse, and nursed them till help came. O! the land rang with praises of this heroic maiden. And poets sang these praises. And royal people sent for her to their houses to see her. But this was her glory in the sight of God, that she had made beautiful for evermore, so that it shines to this day in the memory of men, the lonely and humble lot in which God had placed her.[1]

4. *It is Timely.*—Blessed are the ministries which are not mistimed. How oft, alas! the kindnesses of people come too late! Instead of acting like Mary, *aforehand*, too many act like Joseph and Nicodemus, who brought their sweet spices when the Saviour was in His garden grave. There is something peculiarly sad about these belated kindnesses. If we have flowers to give, why not give them to our friends ere they enter on the long sleep?[2]

¶ Mary anointed her Lord aforehand. Too many alabaster boxes are sealed up and put on the top shelf at the back. They are reached down only at funerals. It was said concerning the monument erected to Burns, "He asked of his generation bread,

[1] A. Macleod, *Talking to the Children*, 171. [2] J. Pearce.

and after he was dead they gave him a stone." George Eliot pathetically says—

> Seven Grecian cities vied for Homer dead
> Through which the living Homer begged for bread.

After his wife's death Carlyle wrote in his diary—"Oh, if I could but see her once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I always loved her through it all. She never did know it—never!" Think of it! That splendid alabaster box of a great man's love sealed up for twenty years.[1]

> 'Tis easy to be gentle when
> Death's silence shames our clamour,
> And easy to discern the best
> Through memory's mystic glamour.
> But wise it were for me and thee,
> Ere love is past forgiving,
> To take this tender lesson home—
> Be patient with the living.

III.

The Perfected Service of the Future Life.

Perfect service may be said to comprise three things: willingness, activity, and completeness.

1. *Willingness.*—Our Lord's words to Mary, "She hath done what she *could*," at once suggest the reflection that all our service here must be more or less limited. Imperfections will mark our work. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Christ's praise of Mary's simple act announces the great principle that ability is the measure of responsibility, and the practical outcome of this principle is a readiness to use the "several ability" which we possess.

It is the duty of every Christian to do something for Christ, something for His honour, His cause, or His servants. Neutrality is antagonism. To stand, doing nothing, is to be obstacles in the way of those who work. Not to "hold forth the word of life," not to "shine as a light in the world," is to lie in the way, a big opaque stone, through which the beams of truth cannot pierce.

H. Cariss J. Sidnell.

But it is a very serious subject of thought, that there are so many of those who do something that never exert the half of their ability. They do not honestly *do what they can.* Obligation and capacity are commensurate. God does not desire "to reap where he has not sown, nor to gather where he has not strawed," but where He has given "much," of them He will expect "the more." He does not expect from a brute the service of a man, or from a man the obedience of an angel; He does not expect from him that has one talent the results of five, or from him that has five the results of ten; but He does expect everywhere, and from all beings, that each shall serve according to his actual and several ability.

¶ Young men, *try* to serve God. Resist the devil when he whispers it is impossible. Try, and the Lord God of the promises will give you strength in the trying. He loves to meet those who struggle to come to Him, and He will meet you and give you the power that you feel you need.[1]

¶ There is a fable which says that one day a prince went into his garden to examine it. He came to the peach tree and said, "What are you doing for me?" The tree said, "In the spring I give my blossoms and fill the air with fragrance, and on my boughs hang the fruit which men will gather and carry into the palace for you." "Well done," said the prince. To the chestnut he said, "What are you doing?" "I am making nests for the birds, and shelter cattle with my leaves and spreading branches." "Well done," said the prince. Then he went down to the meadow, and asked the grass what it was doing. "We are giving up our lives for others, for your sheep and cattle, that they may be nourished"; and the prince said, "Well done." Last of all he asked the tiny daisy what it was doing, and the daisy said, "Nothing, nothing. I cannot make a nesting place for the birds, and I cannot give shelter to the cattle, and I cannot give food for the sheep and the cows—they do not want me in the meadow. All I can do is to be the best little daisy I can be." And the prince bent down and kissed the daisy, and said, "There is none better than thou."[2]

If you cannot on the ocean
  Sail among the swiftest fleet,
Rocking on the highest billows,
  Laughing at the storms you meet,

[1] Bishop Ryle.

[2] F. B. Cowl.

You can stand among the sailors,
Anchored yet within the bay,
You can lend a hand to help them,
As they launch their boats away.

If you are too weak to journey
Up the mountain steep and high,
You can stand within the valley,
While the multitudes go by.

You can chant in happy measure,
As they slowly pass along;
Though they may forget the singer,
They will not forget the song.

2. *Activity.*—Love is active; men prove their love not so much by their words as by their actions. Work is the way to strength. Inactivity is the way to infirmity. The running water clears itself; the still water becomes stagnant. The active soul serves its Master; the idle soul is the devil's workshop. How can you better honour the Bridegroom than by honouring the Bride?

¶ All activity out of Christ, all labour that is not labour in His Church, is in His sight a "standing idle." In truth time belongs not to the Kingdom of God. Not, How much hast thou done? but, What art thou now? will be the question of the last day; though of course we must never forget that all that men have done will greatly affect what they are.[1]

O the rare, sweet sense of living, when one's heart leaps to his labour,
And the very joy of doing is life's richest, noblest dower!
Let the poor—yea, poor in spirit—crave the purple of his neighbour,
Give me just the strength for serving, and the golden present hour!

3. *Completeness.*—Here notice two things—

(1) Our life here is *only the beginning.* In order to serve Christ acceptably we have neither to revolutionise our lot, nor to seek other conditions than those which Providence supplies. The place is nothing, the heart is all. Obscurity, weakness, baffled plans—a thousand nameless limitations of faculty, of

[1] Archbishop Trench.

opportunity, of property—all these are witnesses of silent but victorious faith. In all of them God is glorified, for in all of them His will is done. Out of all of them gates open into heaven and the joy of the Lord.

(2) All "work" here is wrought with "labour," but we have *a vision which reaches beyond*: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them." At the very heart of this word "labours" there is a sense of faintness and exhaustion. It is a tired word which has lost its spring. But when we are told that the dead in Christ "rest from their labours," we are not to take it as meaning that they rest from their work, but from the weariness of work, which is a far nobler emancipation. To take away the faintness is infinitely more gracious than to take us out of the crusade. The redemption of our blessed dead is entry into the tireless life. "They serve him day and night in his temple."[1]

¶ So we too may say, in the spirit of Mary, who brought her best to Christ *aforetime*: "I would not seek heaven because I despaired of earth; I would bring my earthly treasures *into* heaven. I would not fly to Thee in the winter of my heart. I would come when my heart is summer—when its leaves were green. I would bring Thee the full-blown rose, the ripest fruit, the finest songs of the grove. I would break the alabaster box for Thee, not when it was empty, but when it was laden with perfume. I would make my sacrifice a sacrifice of praise."[2]

¶ We have read of the young artist, wearied and discouraged, who slept by the picture which he had done his best to perfect and complete. The master quietly entered the room and, bending over the sleeping pupil, unfolded on the canvas with his own skilful hand the beauty which the worn artist had striven in vain to portray. And when we, tired and spent, lay down earth's toil, our own great Master will make perfect our picture for the Father's many-mansioned house. From our life's service He will remove every stain, every blemish, and every failure. To our life's service He will give the brightest lustre and His highest honour. Shall we not then bring our best to the One who can make it better?

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Our Blessed Dead*, 19.
[2] G. Matheson, *Times of Retirement*, 186.

Rouse to some work of high and holy love,
And then an angel's happiness shalt thou know,
Shalt bless the earth, while in the world above;
The good begun by thee shall onward flow
In many a branching stream, and wider grow;
The seed that in these few and fleeting hours
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in Heaven's imperial bowers.

When they had Sung a Hymn.

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WHEN THEY HAD SUNG A HYMN.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.—xiv. 26.

1. WITH this statement the first two of the Evangelists conclude their narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Our blessed Lord had acted as President in the observance of the Jewish Feast of the Passover, and had engrafted the new Christian rite upon the Paschal celebration. That venerable ordinance, commemorative of the redemption from the bondage of Egypt, has now served its purpose and found its full meaning. The lamb of which Jesus and His disciples partook in the upper room was, as it were, its last victim: the true Passover, "the Lamb of God," is to be "sacrificed for us" to-morrow on Calvary.

2. The Jews had long ago, with the change of outward circumstances, departed from the original form of observing their great feast. On the night of the Exodus they had eaten the Paschal meal in haste,—sandals on feet, staff in hand,—and with the same eager hurry as is shown in our day by passengers in the restaurant of a railway station. But in our Lord's time they partook of the feast at leisure, reclining at the table upon couches. On the first occasion the lamb had been eaten only with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; but now there was red wine on the table, and the custom was for even the poorest Israelite to drink four cups of it. In the Books of Moses there is no mention of any service of praise at the Passover; but now all devout Jews sang at the table the series of six Psalms called "the Hallel" (that is, Hallelujah), from Psalm cxiii. to Psalm cxviii. inclusive,—very much as the Scottish Church has been in the habit of singing Psalm ciii. at the Communion Table.

There was no Divine authority for the changed observance. It was simply that the natural feeling of the nation brought into it this element of thanksgiving. Even the Pharisees and Scribes, who strangled the Jewish religion with red tape, and literalness, and rigid precision, themselves thus kept the feast. And the Lord Jesus fell in with the custom, and Himself thus celebrated the Passover.

¶ Long years ago I happened to be crossing the Simplon on the day of some great Church festival. The bell of the little chapel had tolled for the service, and the simple peasants were gathering for worship. I looked into the church and stood with rigid Protestant defiance. But as I watched the devout congregation, I thought that they were worshipping my Lord and my God —and I knelt with them and gave myself up to a season of communion with God. Then I walked away alone over the Pass, yet not alone; with such a joyous sense of God's presence that few places or days have come to be more memorable than that June day amidst the glorious mountains. I have sometimes thought that its influence has never died out of my life.[1]

I.

Jesus Singing a Hymn.

1. *Jesus Singing.*—It is good to think of our Blessed Master singing. He who taught us to pray, and who spake as never man spake, says, "Let us sing." Music has a new meaning and singing a richer charm since He sang. He who sang at such an hour surely loves to hear us sing as we gather at His table. Since the Master sang a hymn, let us be like Him. I am sorry for those who cannot sing, and sorrier still for those who can sing and do not. Whatever else you do, do sing. Prayer is needful, but prayer itself will one day die. And preaching is needful, but let us thank God that there are no preachers in heaven. But singing will last for ever and ever. Everybody there is in the choir. And Heaven's highest bliss will surely be to sing with Him, in sweeter strains than earth can hear, the new song at the marriage supper of the Lamb.[2]

¶ We sometimes think of Jesus as an austere man. In Quentin Matsy's masterpiece He is represented with dishevelled

[1] M. G. Pearse. [2] *Ibid.*

locks, hollow cheeks, eyes dimmed and brows overarched with anguish—a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was, however, no cynic, no anchorite, but a man among men. It is not recorded that He ever laughed, yet His heart must have been full of laughter; for, seeing the sorrow of the world, He saw the joy beyond it. All men laugh unless they are stolid or dyspeptic, and He was neither. On this occasion He was passing into the dark shadow of the cross, yet He joined in the great Hallel, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." [1]

Why should not Jesus sing?

(1) His heart was in sympathy with all things pure and lovely and of good report. The town where He spent His boyhood is overlooked by a precipitous hill six hundred feet above the level of the sea. It is not to be doubted that oftentimes He climbed up yonder to commune with God. The mountain flowers were about His feet, and every one of them was like a swinging censer full of perfume. All about Him were orchards and vineyards and verdant pastures, and every grass-blade was inscribed with His Father's name. He watched the eagles poising in the cloudless azure, and heard the hum of busy life in the village below; saw Tabor to the eastward clothed with oak and terebinth, and beyond the western hills the mists rising from the Great Sea; to the south lay the plain of Esdraelon, scene of a hundred battles, and far beyond were the gleaming domes of the Holy City. His heart gave thanks with the leaping of the brooks; the birds sang and He sang with them.

(2) Why should not Jesus sing? He had a clear conscience, of all living men the only one who knew no sin. He alone could go to His rest at eventide with no cry, "Have mercy on me, O God! against thee have I sinned and done evil in thy sight." For Him there were no vain regrets, no "might have beens." There was no guile in His heart, no guile on His lips. He was conscious of no war in His members, His soul was set on the discharge of duty.

(3) Why should not Jesus sing? He clearly foresaw the ultimate triumph of truth and goodness. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He

[1] D. J. Burrell.

knew that, whatever rebuffs and reverses there might be, truth and righteousness were sure to triumph in the end.

The eternal step of Progress beats
To that great anthem, strong and slow,
Which God repeats.

There would be martyr-fires and persecutions, and the souls of the faithful would tremble within them, but His trembled not.

Take heart, the waster builds again;
A charmed life old Goodness hath.
The tares may perish, but the grain
Is not for death.

He knew that through all the vicissitudes of history the irresistible God would sit upon His throne, that everything would be overruled to His ultimate glory. Oh, if we could only perceive this! If only we had somewhat of the Master's faith!

God works in all things; all obey
His first propulsion from the night;
Wait thou, and watch, the world is gray
With morning light.

2. *The Hymn.*—The "hymn" here spoken of by Matthew and Mark was probably the second portion of the Hallel. The first part, consisting of Psalms cxiii. and cxiv., was commonly sung before the meal; and the second part, comprising Psalms cxv. to cxviii., after the fourth cup of wine. The Jews chanted these holy songs at the paschal table as their eucharistic hymn; and to truly devout souls they were laden with Messianic music.

What a peculiar interest gathers round these particular Psalms, when we remember that they were sung on that memorable night by the human heart and the human lips of Jesus! And how pregnant with meaning must many of the verses have been both to Himself and the disciples! For example: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Again, "Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The

Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."[1]

¶ The word "hymn" has a different meaning from "psalm." In the margin we have "psalm." But according to the highest authorities, from Augustine down to our day, there is a distinct difference—though it is not always easy to define it—between the word translated "psalm" and that translated "hymn." We have those two words and one other word used together in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and his Epistle to the Ephesians (Col. iii. 16; Eph. v. 19)—"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," or "odes." The Apostle attached a special significance to each of these words. It has been noted as a striking fact that in the Old Testament there is no general Hebrew word for the Psalms; but the translators of the Old Testament into the Greek, in the Septuagint, in referring to the songs of David and others, use the word "psalm." That word denotes primarily a "touching" or "twanging"; then the harp; and, finally, the song that was sung to the accompaniment of the harp or lyre. Hence the word first of all means a "touching," then that which is touched, and then the music which comes out as a result of the touching with the finger or the ancient plectron. Therefore, the word "psalm" denotes any spiritual song that is sung to the accompaniment of an instrument. Then there comes the word "hymn." While the psalm, as Archbishop Trench reminds us, may be a "De profundis," the hymn is always a "Magnificat." It is pre-eminently *a song of praise.* The ancient Greeks sang hymns of praise of their gods and heroes; hence apparently the long time that was allowed to pass before the word "hymn" became a familiar one in the Christian Church. The Greeks would naturally understand it to be an ascription of praise to some one other than the true God; but gradually it gained a prominent place in Christian phraseology. Augustine asserted that a hymn first of all must be a song; in the second place it must be praise; and in the third place it must be praise to God. Accepting this definition, a hymn, while it may be a psalm, is a psalm of a particular kind—it is *an ascription of praise to God.*[2]

O to have heard that hymn
Float through the chamber dim,
Float through that "upper room,"
Hushed in the twilight gloom!

[1] C. Jerdan. [2] D. Davies.

Up the dark, starry skies
Rolled the deep harmonies;
Angels, who heard the strain,
How ran the high refrain?

How rose the holy song?
Triumphant, clear, and strong
As a glad bird uplift
Over the wild sea-drift?
Or was its liquid flow
Reluctant, sad, and slow,
Presage and prophecy
Of lone Gethsemane?

Was it a lofty psalm,
Foretelling crown and palm?
Soared it to heights of prayer
On the still, vibrant air?
When the last feast was spread,
And the last words were said,
Sang the Lord Christ the hymn
In the old chamber dim?[1]

II.

The Occasion of the Hymn.

It is a striking fact that here and in the parallel passage in the Gospel according to St. Matthew we have the *only recorded instance of Christ and His disciples singing.* It is extremely probable that they sang on many occasions; but it is specially recorded now because of its exceptional significance.

1. We are apt to marvel, indeed, that the Redeemer was able to sing at all at such a time. He has bidden His sorrowful disciples farewell, and uttered the words—"Arise, let us go hence." He and they sing the Hallel immediately after they have risen from the table, but before they go out into the night. Jesus is on His way to Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha. He is about to be betrayed by Judas and condemned by Pilate. He has immediately before Him His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and Passion, His physical anguish and desolation of soul upon the accursed tree. He is the "Man of Sorrows,"

[1] Julia C. R. Dorr.

about to be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities"; and yet on the way to His doom He "sings a hymn"! This fact shows us how pure His faith was, and how unflinching His courage. It proves to us how whole-hearted He was in His work, and how absolute was His devotion to His Father's will. He has been saying for some time past, "For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

¶ It is a singular incident in the life of the God-fearing Jehoshaphat, that he (2 Chron. xx. 21), before the commencement of a decisive engagement, placed a band of singers at the head of his army, that they might "praise the beauty of holiness," and go forth to fight as to a festival; but what was this contest compared with that which awaited the Saviour? Yet He too goes forth to meet the insolent foe with the hymn of praise upon His lips; and when the hymn was ended, He calmly steps across the threshold which divides the hall from the street, security from danger, life from death.[1]

2. What did the singing of the hymn signify?

(1) *It meant the fulfilment of the Law.*—Because it was the settled custom in Israel to recite or sing these Psalms, our Lord Jesus Christ did the same; for He would leave nothing unfinished. Just as, when He went down into the waters of baptism, He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," so He seemed to say, when sitting at the table, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; therefore let us sing unto the Lord, as God's people in past ages have done."

(2) *It meant surrender to the Father's Will.*—If you knew that at—say ten o'clock to-night—you would be led away to be mocked, and despised, and scourged, and that to-morrow's sun would see you falsely accused, hanging, a convicted criminal, to die upon a cross, do you think that you could sing to-night, after your last meal? I am sure you could not, unless with more than earth-born courage and resignation your soul could say, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You would sing if your spirit were like the Saviour's spirit; if, like Him, you could exclaim, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"; but if there should remain in you any selfishness, any desire to be spared the bitterness of death, you would not be able to chant the Hallel with the Master.

[1] J. J. van Oosterzee.

Blessed Jesus, how wholly wert Thou given up! how perfectly consecrated! so that, whereas other men sing when they are marching to their joys, Thou didst sing on the way to death; whereas other men lift up their cheerful voices when honour awaits them, Thou hadst a brave and holy sonnet on Thy lips when shame, and spitting, and death were to be Thy portion.

¶ Thus the first thing Jesus did was to *set His great sorrow and Passion to music.* Burdened, as the world's Saviour, with the weight of the world's sin, He nevertheless made all His sorrow and even His agony harmonious. We have read in the Psalms about singing the statutes of the Lord in the days of our pilgrimage. That is the highest spiritual attainment when we not merely obey God but make obedience musical, when we get praise out of our very service and suffering for God's sake. It is there that the Saviour, as in so many other instances, has become our great example.[1]

(3) *It meant the sacrifice of Himself on behalf of the work given Him to do.*—He has a baptism to be baptized with, and He is straitened until it be accomplished. The Master does not go forth to the agony in the garden with a cowed and trembling spirit, all bowed and crushed in the dust; He advances to the conflict like a man who has his full strength about him. Taken out to be a victim (if I may use such a figure), not as a worn-out ox that has long borne the yoke, but as the firstling of the bullock, in the fulness of His strength, He goes forth to the slaughter, with His glorious, undaunted spirit fast and firm within Him, glad to suffer for His people's sake, and for His Father's glory.[2]

(4) *It meant the assurance of victory.*—The death-song of Jesus is a song of triumph uttered before the agony came. He knew absolutely that the Father would not fail Him, that evil could not prevail, and that the sacrifice would be a great victory. But mark this: He could not see beyond Calvary. He knew, but He could not see. Faith never can do otherwise than that; it knows, but it cannot see.

Two great mysteries stand out here. First, the mystery of His agony. As a Roman Catholic theologian has put it, the agony in the garden and the dereliction on Calvary present to the gaze an ocean of sorrow on the shores of which we may

[1] D. Davies. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

stand and look down upon the waveless surface, but the depths below no created intelligence can fathom. Never speak lightly of the agony of Christ, for you do not know what it was, or how terrible, or how overwhelming even to the Divine Son of God. The second mystery is the mystery of His deliverance. He saw through the first mystery, but not the second. He saw the agony as we never can see it, but He did not see beyond. We see the second, but not the first. We never can look on Calvary except over the empty tomb. We see on this side of the Cross; Christ looked on the other. Think, then, of the grandeur and the magnificence of that august Figure, standing pathetic and lonely in the upper room, singing, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. . . . O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

¶ About the close of the Civil War in America some Confederate officers were once listening to some Union officers singing the songs that were most popular in the camps of the Northern army during the Civil War. After the singing had gone on for some time, one of the Confederate officers said, "If we had had your songs we could have defeated you. You won the victory because you had the best songs."

¶ A little while ago, when the most notorious infidel of this century lay dead in his home on the shores of the Hudson, the telegraph which bore the message to the ends of the earth, when telling of the kind of funeral service that would be held over the body, said: "There will be no singing."[1]

¶ The hymn, "Fear not, O little flock," is known as the hymn of Gustavus Adolphus. In Butterworth's *The Story of the Hymns*, the following graphic incident is told of the battle of Lützen: As we read the stirring lines a vision rises before us of two mighty hosts encamped over against each other, stilled by the awe that falls on brave hearts when momentous events are about to be decided. The thick fogs of the autumn morning hide the foes from each other; only the shrill note of the clarion is heard piercing through the mist. Then suddenly in the Swedish camp there is a silence. With a solemn mien Gustavus advances to the front rank of his troops, and kneels down in the presence of all his followers. In a moment the whole army bends with him in prayer. Then there bursts forth the sound of trumpets, and ten thousand voices join in song:

[1] L. A. Banks.

Fear not, O little flock, the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow,
Dread not his rage and power."

The army of Gustavus moved forward to victory, an army so inspired with confidence in God could not but be victorious: but at the moment of triumph a riderless horse came flying back to the camp—it was that of the martyred king.

III.

The Disciples Singing with Him.

It was wonderful that the disciples could sing on such a night as this. It had been to them a night of perplexity, and awe, and wonder. Their Master had been saying and doing things most solemn and strange. There had been the feet-washing, the disclosure of the traitor, the institution of the Sacrament, the eager questions, the deep discourse, and the farewell greeting. What a night of emotion and expectation! Only with sad countenances and in muffled tones could the Eleven, when their Lord is on the point of leaving them, join in the refrain of the Hallel—"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

How much it meant for them! The solace of that song, and the voice of their Lord blending with their voices, was the most tender and effectual way of comforting them. It was as the mother soothes her little one by singing. Could they fear since He sang? For them too the words were a strength as well as a solace.

Take, Shepherd, take Thy prize,
For who like Thee can sing?
No fleece of mingled dyes,
No apples fair, I bring;
No smooth two-handled bowl,
Wrought with the clasping vine—
Take, take my heart and soul,
My songs, for they are Thine!

Oh, sing Thy song again,
And these of mine may pass
As quick as summer rain
Dries on the thirsty grass.

Thou wouldst not do me wrong,
Thou wilt not silent be;
Thy one, Thy only song,
Dear Shepherd, teach to me![1]

1. *They were Israelites.*—Remembering the fact commemorated by the Paschal supper, they might well rejoice. They sang of their nation in bondage, trodden beneath the tyrannical foot of Pharaoh; they began the Psalm right sorrowfully, as they thought of the bricks made without straw, and of the iron furnace; but the strain soon mounted from the deep bass, and began to climb the scale, as they sang of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lord appearing to him in the burning bush. They remembered the mystic rod, which became a serpent, and which swallowed up the rods of the magicians; their music told of the plagues and wonders which God had wrought upon Zoan; and of that dread night when the first-born of Egypt fell before the avenging sword of the angel of death, while they themselves, feeding on the lamb which had been slain for them, and whose blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and upon the side-posts of the door, had been graciously preserved. Then the song went up concerning the hour in which all Egypt was humbled at the feet of Jehovah; whilst as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and they went by the way of the sea, even of the Red Sea. The strain rose higher still as they tuned the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Jubilantly they sang of the Red Sea, and of the chariots of Pharaoh which went down into the midst thereof, and the depths covered them till there was not one of them left. It was a glorious chant, indeed, when they sang of Rahab cut in pieces, and of the dragon wounded at the sea, by the right hand of the Most High, for the deliverance of the chosen people.

2. *They sang with a New Meaning.*—For Jesus had set ancient words to new harmonies. The very words which had been sung often before, and which had profound meaning on the lips of ancient saints, had never such a meaning on human lips as they had this night. There are some words of God—some extraordinary utterances—that go on disclosing new depths of meaning throughout the ages, and are set to

[1] Dora Greenwell.

music now and again; but no music to which they are set can give expression to the fulness of their meaning.

It was so with regard to the great Hallel and other inspired utterances. David and others had first uttered them, and ancient saints had repeated them. As the ages moved, they seem to have accumulated meaning; but not until the Christ Himself came to utter the words did they find full and adequate expression. For instance, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," Christ had said in so many words before, but He had not sung it until now. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made"—so true of many other days, but not so true of any day as this. "We will rejoice and be glad in it." What! be glad in it! Under the very shadow of the Cross, with all the agony and the shame before Him; and we know by the record how keenly He felt all.

¶ In Wesley's whole life there was perhaps nothing that made so deep an impression on him as, when crossing the Atlantic in a great storm, the ship's sails blown away and the seas breaking over the ship, and everybody else screaming in terror, the simple Moravians gathered together with their women and children and sang a hymn of praise to God. It was what Luther always did when evil tidings reached him and things looked threatening. He rang out cheerily the words—

A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon.[1]

IV.

Let Us Sing.

1. It is meet and proper that we should sing in the services of the sanctuary. In Solomon's temple, when the sons of Asaph in their white linen raised the tune, accompanied with the great orchestra of harps and cymbals and followed by the mighty choirs shouting back from the galleries in antiphonal service, the cloudy Presence came forth from behind the fine-twined

[1] M. G. Pearse.

curtains and filled the sacred place; so, while we sing, the doors of the sanctuary move upon their hinges and He enters whose presence brings to us fulness of life and joy.

When friends are few or far away,
  Sing on, dear heart, sing on!
They rise to sing who kneel to pray,
  Sing on, dear heart, sing on!
The songs of earth to heav'n ascend,
And with adoring anthems blend,
Whose ringing echoes ne'er shall end;
  Sing on, dear heart, sing on![1]

2. Let us sing as we go about our tasks. The carpenter does better work if he whistles as he drives his plane. The Puritan girl in *The Minister's Wooing*, humming the old Psalm tunes, might well make her lover think of heaven and angels. The soldiers, a hundred locked to every one of the great guns, vainly sought to climb the steep ascent of St. Bernard until the flutes struck up La Marseillaise, "Ye sons of freedom, wake to glory!" We also lift our burdens the more easily, meet our sorrows the more resignedly, perform our services and tasks the more joyously, when God's praises are ringing in our hearts.

Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,
  In every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim
  Thy being and Thy ways.

Not for the lip of praise alone,
  Nor e'en the praising heart,
I ask, but for a life made up
  Of praise in every part.

Praise in the common words I speak,
  Life's common looks and tones;
In intercourse at hearth and board
  With my beloved ones.

Not in the temple crowd alone,
  Where holy voices chime,
But in the silent paths of earth,
  The quiet rooms of time.

[1] V. J. Charlesworth.

So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free,
But all my life in every step
Be fellowship with Thee.[1]

3. Let us sing in times of trouble. God giveth His people "songs in the night." Paul and Silas at Philippi, their feet in the stocks, their backs tingling with the pain of recent scourging, made the dungeon ring with song, insomuch "that the prisoners heard them." It was a most unusual sound. Those dark corridors had rung with oaths and curses many a time; but who were these that could uplift at midnight the melodies of thanksgiving? "The prisoners heard them."

¶ Martin Luther, in the darkest times, used to say to Melanchthon, his fellow-labourer in the Reformation, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and let them do their worst." One of Longfellow's lyrics on American slavery has for its subject "The Slave singing at Midnight"—

Loud he sang the Psalm of David!
He, a Negro and enslaved,
Sang of Israel's victory,
Sang of Zion, bright and free.[2]

¶ I have heard of a young mother, whose means of livelihood was her gift of song, and once when her only child was lying ill at home she had to sing for bread before a gaping crowd, and refuse an encore that she might escape from the footlights and get back to that suffering bedside. When she got there it was only to hear that there was no hope. This was the last request of her dying child—"Mother, sing to me!" Can you think of anything more terrible than that midnight agony? In the very presence of the shadow of death the brave little woman gathers her baby to her breaking heart and paces that death-room, singing—

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.

The child was going home, the mother was to live, but it was she and not the child who sang the death-song of Jesus, and sang it well for love's sake.[3]

[1] H. Bonar. [2] C. Jerdan. [3] R. J. Campbell.

Thou Heart! why dost thou lift thy voice?
The birds are mute; the skies are dark;
Nor doth a living thing rejoice;
Nor doth a living creature hark;
Yet thou art singing in the dark.

How small thou art; how poor and frail;
Thy prime is past; thy friends are chill;
Yet as thou hadst not any ail
Throughout the storm thou liftest still
A praise the winter cannot chill.

Then sang that happy Heart reply:
"God lives, God loves, and hears me sing;
How warm, how safe, how glad am I,
In shelter 'neath His spreading wing,
And then I cannot choose but sing."[1]

4. Let us sing as we meet Death. The Christian can rejoice even in the near approach of death, and under the dark shadow of bereavement. John Bunyan's "Miss Much-Afraid" "went through the river singing." Dr. Thomas Guthrie, when he was dying, asked those who were about him to sing him "a bairn's hymn." John Angell James was accustomed to read Psalm ciii. at family prayer on Saturday evenings; but on the Saturday of the week in which his wife had died he hesitated for a moment, and then looked up and said, "Notwithstanding what has happened this week, I see no reason for departing from our usual custom of reading Psalm ciii.; 'Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name.'"[2]

¶ I once heard of a young father who fought a battle with fate on this wise. He was smitten with a deadly disease; he knew it, and was told that his only chance of life was that he should suffer some one to minister to him, and for the rest of his days—short days, too—he should take things quietly and rest and wait for death. "Let others suffer, and let others strive; be still," said the doctor, "that is your only chance of life." But he had two little babes, so he took another course. He might have turned bitter, and cursed and railed against fate, and, with it, God. Or he might have pitied himself and taken the easier course, and called upon others to provide for these his loved ones. But he did not; he went out as if nothing had happened, back to

[1] Danske Carolina Dandridge. [2] O. Jerdan.

his work with double intensity. He could not leave his children to the mercy of the world. It is not that the world is so very unkind, but it forgets. He determined they should have their chance when he himself was gone. He uttered no complaint; he never presented to them any story of his own heroism. He just went on with brave heart and cheerful face. For years that man sang the death-song of Christ, and no martyr going to the stake ever sang it better.[1]

¶ There are many different ways in which brave men go forth to meet suffering and death. Some face the last enemy with defiant front, some with reckless abandonment, some with absolute gaiety. The Christian, no less brave than the bravest of all, meets it in a way entirely his own—with a sacred song upon his lips. That was how Margaret Wilson met it at the water of Blednoch in the days of the Covenant. Hoping that the sight of her comrade's last agony would dismay her into submission, they bound the older woman to the stake farthest out in the stream, and when the drowning waves of the incoming tide were doing their pitiless work, they asked the girl what she thought of her companion now. But in that awful hour of trial she neither faltered nor failed. Opening her New Testament, she read aloud the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—the great chapter which tells how the condemnation of sin is cancelled by the Saviour; and how the spirit of adoption delivers from bondage and fear; and how nothing, neither death nor life, can separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The chapter finished, she sang her farewell psalm—

My sins and faults of youth
Do thou, O Lord, forget;
After thy mercy think on me,
And for thy goodness great.

And so singing she went forth to be done to death by cruel and wicked hands. Was she not treading the ancient track which the Lord had trod before her; and in the same spirit and style too?[2]

¶ When Bishop Hannington was taken prisoner by Mwangu, he says: "Suddenly about twenty ruffians fell on us, and threw me to the ground. Feeling that I was being dragged away to be murdered at a distance, I sang, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus,' and then laughed at the very agony of the situation." At the same time three native Christian lads were taken prisoners. They were tortured; their arms were cut off, and they were bound alive

[1] R. J. Campbell.

[2] A. Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, 345.

to the scaffolding, under which a fire was made, and so they were slowly burned to death. Their enemies stood around jeering, and told them now to pray to Jesus, if they thought that He could do anything to help them. The spirit of the martyr at once entered into these lads, and together they raised their voices and praised Jesus in the fire, singing till their shrivelled tongues refused to form the sound, *Killa siku tunsifu*—a hymn translated into the musical language of Uganda. These were the words they sang—

Daily, daily, sing to Jesus,
Sing, my soul, His praises due;
All He does deserves our praises,
And our deep devotion too:
For in deep humiliation,
He for us did live below;
Died on Calvary's Cross of torture,
Rose to save our souls from woe![1]

[1] *Hymns and their Stories*, 188.

The Prayer in Gethsemane.

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THE PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.—xiv. 36.

AT the close of his account of the Temptation, St. Luke tells us that then the devil left our Lord for a season. Doubtless there was no time throughout His life—which indeed was one victory over evil—in which that great adversary left Him wholly unassailed; but the words lead us to look for some special manifestation of his malice,—some sequel to his first desperate attempt,—some last struggle with his Conqueror. Nor is the expectation vain. The Agony in the garden is in many respects the natural correlative to the Temptation. In this we see Christ's human will proved to be in perfect harmony with the righteous will of God, just as in that His sense and soul and spirit were found subjected to the higher laws of life and devotion and providence. The points of similarity between them are numerous and striking. The Temptation occurred directly after the public recognition of our Lord's Messiahship at His Baptism: the Agony was separated only by a few days from His triumphal entry into the Holy City. The Temptation preceded the active work of our Lord's prophetic ministry: the Agony ushered in the final scenes of His priestly offering. The Temptation was endured in the savage wastes of the wilderness: the Agony in the silent shades of the night. Thrice under various pleas did Satan dare to approach the Saviour: thrice now does the Saviour approach His Father with a prayer of unutterable depth. When the Temptation was over, angels came and ministered to Him who had met Satan face to face: during the Agony an angel was seen strengthening Him who fought with death, knowing all

its terrors. But there are also differences between the two events which give to each their peculiar meaning and importance for us, though they are thus intimately connected. At the first our Lord was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted: at the last He retired into the garden to seek the presence of God. At the first He went alone to meet man's enemy: at the last He takes with Him three loved disciples to watch and pray while He approaches His Father. At the first Satan lures Him to gratify each element of His nature: at the last he endeavours to oppress Him by fear. At the first our Lord repels the Tempter with the language of invincible majesty: at the last He seems to sink under a burden—like the cross which He soon carried—too heavy for Him to bear.

The prayer contains:—

I. His Assurance of the Father's Ability.
II. His Petition.
III. His Acceptance of the Father's Will.

It is introduced by the invocation, "Abba, Father"; and it leads to a consideration of Christ in Prayer.

The Invocation.

"Abba, Father."

1. The combination, "Abba, Father," occurs three times in the New Testament, with a meaning which is the same every time but is not fully understood until the three occasions are studied separately and then brought together. The three occasions are these: (1) By Jesus in Gethsemane. The words are: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark xiv. 36). (2) By St. Paul, in writing to the Galatians. The words are: "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 4–6). (3) By St. Paul, to the Romans.

The words are: "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. viii. 15–17).

Take the thoughts in order—

(1) Here are all the persons concerned in redemption: (*a*) the Father, to whom the cry is made; (*b*) the Son, who makes the cry for Himself in Gethsemane; (*c*) the Spirit of the Son, who makes it in the heart of the other sons; (*d*) the sons themselves, who, under the power of the Spirit, cry, "Abba, Father."

(2) The cry is the cry of a son to a father. That in every case is the whole point and meaning of it. In one case it is the cry of the Only-begotten Son; in the other cases it is the cry of the adopted sons. But it is always the cry of a son who has the heart of a son. An adopted son might not have the heart of a son. But in each case here the Father says, "My beloved son"; and the son responds, crying, "Abba, Father."

(3) The true heart of a son, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," *is due to the gift of the Spirit.* Look at St. Paul's argument to the Galatians. There he states two things: first, that when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son into the world; second, that because we are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.[1]

2. Our Lord's appeal to God as "Father" was evidence that He was not, even then, forsaken in His humanity. He experienced the deep depression, the spiritual eclipse, the midnight darkness, under which we may speak as if utterly desolate. But a *feeling* of forsakenness is no proof of the *reality.* As the sun is not altered when eclipsed, so God was as near in Gethsemane as on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Sufferer expressed this confidence when calling on Him as "Father." God has forsaken no one who utters this cry. The appeal is the response to His own call. If as a child I say, "My Father," He as Father has

[1] *Expository Times*, xx. 358.

already said, "My child." Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one.

Speak to me, my God;
And let me know the living Father cares
For me, even me; for this one of His choice.
Hast Thou no word for me? I am Thy thought.
God, let Thy mighty heart beat into mine,
And let mine answer as a pulse to Thine.
See, I am low; yea, very low; but Thou
Art high, and Thou canst lift me up to Thee.
I am a child, a fool before Thee, God;
But Thou hast made my weakness as my strength.
I am an emptiness for Thee to fill;
My soul, a cavern for Thy sea.
"Thou makest me long," I said, "therefore wilt give;
My longing is Thy promise, O my God."[1]

I.

His Assurance of the Father's Ability.

"All things are possible unto thee."

The words are without reservation and they must be accepted unreservedly. All things are possible to God always. There is no question of His power under any circumstances. The only question is as to His will. "All things are possible unto thee."

It was so with our Lord on earth. "If thou wilt," said the leper, "thou canst make me clean." His answer was, "I will." Whereupon the leprosy departed from the man.

This is a most comfortable doctrine. There is nothing impossible with God. We never have to do with a baffled, helpless God. He is always able. And so, as the only doubt we can ever have about Him is His willingness, we know that whatever we do not receive is something that would not be good for us to receive. For we know that His will is to do us good. We know that He will never withhold any good thing from them that love Him.

The cup which was put into the hands of our Lord in

[1] George Macdonald.

Gethsemane was so bitter that if He had not known absolutely that all things are possible to God, He would have thought that the Father could not help offering it. And that is actually how we look upon it. There was no other way, we say. We limit God's resources. We curtail God's power. We may say that there was no better way; for that is self-evident. He took this way of redeeming us because it was the best way—the way of love. But if it were not that His will always is for the best —the best for us and the best for our Saviour—who can tell that He would not have chosen another way than this strange way of agony and bitter tears?

It was the best way for our Saviour. When He was able to say, "Not my will but thine," He entered into rest. He despised the shame. And it is the best way for us. "Father, if it be possible," we say. But let us never, never end with that. For it is possible if it is His will. Let us always add —"Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

II.

His Petition.

"Remove this cup from me."

What was the Cup? In considering this question, says E. L. Hull, we have to take account of two things at the outset:

(1) On the one hand, we must never forget that the suffering of Christ is a mystery too profound for us ever fully to understand. The very fact that the Divine One could suffer is, in itself, beyond our comprehension. The fact that Christ's sufferings were vicarious, invests them with still deeper darkness. That in Christ the Divine was manifested in a human form, and was thus connected with the human, is the source of the profoundest mystery in His sufferings. We know that in man the soul and body mysteriously affect each other; that the agony of the spirit will, by some inexplicable method, shatter the material frame; but what effect the manifestation of Divinity had on a frail human body we can never understand. Thus it must not be forgotten that the sufferings of Christ as

the Divine Man are veiled in impenetrable darkness, and form a subject which must be approached with deepest awe. The man who boldly speculates on this has lost all reverence, while he who stands before it in reverential love will be able partly to comprehend its mystery.

(2) The second point is, that while the sufferings of Christ are awfully mysterious, we may obtain some dim insight into their character and source by considering that, though Divine, Christ was also perfectly human—subject to all the sinless laws of our nature. We are spirits in human forms; we know how the spiritual can suffer *in* the material, and have thus one requisite for forming a feeble conception of the source of the Saviour's sufferings.

¶ Luther was once questioned at table concerning the "bloody sweat" and the other deep spiritual sufferings which Christ endured in the Garden. Then he said: "No man can know or conceive what that anguish must have been. If any man began even to experience such suffering, he must die. You know many do die of sickness of heart! for heart-anguish is indeed death. If a man could feel such anguish and distress as Christ felt, it would be impossible for him to endure it, and for his soul to remain in his body. Soul and body would part. To Christ alone was this agony possible, and it wrung from Him 'sweat which was as great drops of blood.'"[1]

1. Was the Cup the physical pain of His sufferings? He endured physical anguish to a degree inconceivable by us; for if it be true that the more sensitive the spirit the more it weakens the bodily frame—that intense and protracted thought diminishes its vigour—that mental labours waste its energy and render it susceptible of the keenest suffering, then we may well suppose that Christ in the agony of the garden and the cross endured physical suffering to an inconceivable degree. But apart from the frequent occasions on which He showed that His *spirit* was troubled, we may perhaps perceive that bodily suffering was not the chief source of His sorrow, from one fact, namely, that physical suffering is endurable, and by itself would not have overwhelmed Him. Man can bear bodily anguish to almost any degree. Granting the consciousness of rectitude, you can devise no pain which cannot be borne by some men.

[1] *Watchwords from Luther*, 17.

¶ I have been struck lately, in reading works by some writers who belong to the Romish Church, with the marvellous love which they have towards the Lord Jesus Christ. I did think, at one time, that it could not be possible for any to be saved in that Church; but, often, after I have risen from reading the books of these holy men, and have felt myself to be quite a dwarf by their side, I have said, "Yes, despite their errors, these men must have been taught of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding all the evils of which they have drunk so deeply, I am quite certain that they must have had fellowship with Jesus, or else they could not have written as they did." Such writers are few and far between; but there is a remnant according to the election of grace even in the midst of that apostate Church. Looking at a book by one of them the other day, I met with this remarkable expression, "Shall that body, which has a thorn-crowned Head, have delicate, pain-fearing members? God forbid!" That remark went straight to my heart at once.[1]

2. Was the Cup the fear of Death? We cannot conceive that the overwhelming sorrow of Jesus arose from the prospect of His approaching dissolution. For the suffering of men through fear of death may be ascribed to two causes,—either the sense of sin, or a doubt regarding the nature of the future life. We can well conceive how a man who has a half dread lest death may be the extinction of being, or who knows not whether futurity will bring him blessedness or woe, should be overcome with a strange horror of dying. To such a man the uncertainty is terrible, as he feels death may be but the escape from ills that are bearable to ills that may be infinite. But we cannot suppose that anything like doubt or a fear of the change of death for one moment overshadowed Jesus Christ. For, take one illustration out of many, and compare the language of Christ with that of the apostle Paul in prospect of dying, and we shall perceive that dread of the mere change of death could not have affected Jesus. Paul on the very threshold of martyrdom wrote, "I am ready to be offered."

¶ Celsus and Julian the Apostate contrasted Jesus, sorrowing and trembling in the garden, with Socrates, the hero of the poison cup, and with other heroes of antiquity, greatly, of course, to the disadvantage of the former. "Why, then," said Celsus, scornfully alluding to Jesus' conflict in the garden, "does He supplicate help,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

and bewail Himself and pray for escape from the fear of death, expressing Himself in terms like these, 'O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'?" The Emperor Julian, quoted by Theodore of Mopsuestia, uses, if possible, still more scornful language: "Jesus presents such petitions as a wretched mortal would offer when unable to bear a calamity with serenity, and although Divine, He is strengthened by an angel." To these heathen philosophers Jesus, trembling and agonised in Gethsemane, seemed to come far short of the great men of classic antiquity.[1]

¶ Whence did the martyrs draw their fortitude? Where did they find their strength to meet death so bravely? Why could they look the great enemy in the face without flinching, even when he wore his grimmest aspect? They were "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." His example was before them, His spirit within them, His face above them. They saw Him standing at the right hand of God, the Victor in His glory. They knew Him as the conqueror of death and the great ravisher of the power of the grave. They passed into the valley treading in the footprints He had left; they looked up through its darkness at their Leader on the mountain-top. "The Breaker had gone up before them," leaving the gates open for them to pass through.[2]

Thus every where we find our suffering God,
And where He trod
May set our steps: the Cross on Calvary
Uplifted high
Beams on the martyr host, a beacon light
In open fight.

To the still wrestlings of the lonely heart
He doth impart
The virtue of His midnight agony,
When none was nigh,
Save God and one good angel, to assuage
The tempest's rage.

Mortal! if life smile on thee, and thou find
All to thy mind,
Think, who did once from Heaven to Hell descend
Thee to befriend;
So shalt Thou dare forego, at His dear call,
Thy best, thine all.

[1] A. B. Cameron. [2] G. A. Sowter.

"O Father! not my will, but Thine be done"—
So spake the Son.
Be this our charm, mellowing earth's ruder noise
Of griefs and joys;
That we may cling for ever to Thy breast
In perfect rest![1]

3. There are several ingredients in the Cup. They may not be all equally evident, and when we have considered them all we may still be far from the bottom of this mystery of mysteries. But it is helpful to consider them, if it is done reverently and self-reproachfully.

(1) The Cup was the necessity of coming into closest relations with sinners, the exceeding guilt of whose sin He alone was able to understand. Like the dwellers in a city slum, they were unaware of the foul air they were breathing, they were ignorant of the uncleanness of their lives. He came from the purity and holiness of God's throne. How could He breathe in this atmosphere? How could He touch these defiled garments? Yet He must come into the very midst of it. His sympathy for the sinner is not less than His loathing for the sin.

¶ We know that the sympathy which a human spirit has with *man* is in proportion to the magnitude of that spirit's powers, and the depth of its emotional nature. It is impossible for a human soul to sympathise with *all* humanity, but the men of greatest genius and profoundest feeling have the strongest sympathy with the race. Men of feebler and narrower nature care but little for those beyond the circle of their own friends, while the heart of the patriot beats in sympathy with the sorrows of a nation and measures the wrongs of an age. Christ's sympathy as the Divine Son of Man was wide as the world. On all who lived then, on the men of the past, on the generations of the future, He looked. For all He felt. The pity of the Infinite One throbbed in His heart. To His ear the great cry of the world was audible, and to His eye all the woes of humanity were clear. Rise a step higher, and consider that Jesus saw the deep connection between suffering and sin—saw men being driven like slaves in the chains that connect the sin with the suffering, and at the same time blinded by their own evil. He saw in sorrow more than sorrow. Every tear of the weeping world and every death that broke the fair companionships of earth, touched His sympathy, not simply by their agony, but because they were the fruits of

[1] J. Keble, *The Christian Year*, 85.

sin. Here we find the meaning of the sighing and sadness with which He looked on suffering, for, while He denounced the narrow notion that each man's suffering springs from his own sin, yet suffering and death were to Him the signs of man's universal wandering from God. Rise one step higher—a mighty step, yet one the extent of which we may faintly apprehend. Christ knew the power of sin just because He was free from it. He entered into the very awfulness of transgression because of His perfect sympathy with man. Does this seem perplexing? Do we not know that the purest and most compassionate men ever have the keenest perception of the sins of their brethren, and feel them like a burden on their own hearts? Must not Christ, the Perfect One, have felt the evil of the world's sin, as it pressed against His soul, most profoundly because He was sinless?[1]

(2) This Cup of suffering was embittered by the behaviour of those for whom He was suffering. As the wretched victims of debauchery will sometimes refuse the sympathy and help of those who seek to restore them to a better life, so Christ was despised and rejected by those whom He desired to redeem. The Gentiles crucified Him; the rulers of His people condemned Him to death; His disciples forsook Him and fled; one of them betrayed Him. He that ate bread with Him lifted up his heel against Him.

¶ This is a grief which strikes deeply and keenly into the soul, in proportion to its own elevation and purity. Such souls care not for the opposition and for the obloquy of the stranger, or the worldly, or of those from whom nothing better can be expected. But the real keen and piercing grief of noble minds is when they feel that the familiar friend in whom they trusted has turned against them, that the leader and companion on whom they leaned, as on a part of themselves, has given way. This is, indeed, agony. Of all the dreadful experiences of human life is not this one of the darkest, the moment when the truth may have first flashed upon us that some steadfast character on whom we relied has broken in our hand; that in some fine spirit whom we deeply admired has been disclosed a yawning cavern of sin and wickedness? Such was His feeling when He saw that Judas could no more be trusted; when He saw that Peter and James and John, instead of watching round Him, had sunk into a deep slumber—"What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"

(3) This want of understanding of even His own disciples drove Him into a *solitude* that at such a time and to such a

E. L. Hull.

nature must have been very hard to bear. Notice the words, "He went a little further." Do you not already feel the awful loneliness conveyed by these words: the sense of separation, the sense of solitude? Jesus is approaching the solemn climax of His life, and as He draws near to it the solitude deepens. He has long since left the home of His mother and His brethren, and will see it no more. He has but recently left the sacred home of Bethany, that haven of peace where He has often rested, and where the hands of Mary have anointed Him against His burial. He has even now left the chamber of the Paschal supper, and the seal of finality has been put upon His earthly ministry in the drinking of the cup when He said to His disciples, "*Remember* me." He has just left eight of His disciples at the outer gate of Gethsemane, saying, "Stay ye here while I go and pray yonder." A few moments later, and He parts from Peter and James and John, saying, "Tarry ye here and watch with me," and He went a little further. It was but a stone's throw, says St. Luke, and yet an infinite gulf now lay between Him and them.

¶ This loneliness of life in its common forms we all know something about. We know, for instance, that the parting of friends is one of the commonest experiences of life. People come into our lives for a time; they seem inseparable from us, and then by force of circumstances or by some slowly widening difference of temper or opinion, or by one of those many social forms of separation of which life is full, they slowly drift out of our touch and our life. "We must part, as all human creatures have parted," wrote Dean Swift to Alexander Pope, and there is no sadder sentence than that in human biography. It strikes upon the ear like a knell.[1]

¶ But no boldness of thought and no heroism of conduct will ever be possible to us until we have learned to stand alone and to go "a little further." You remember that the favourite lines of General Gordon, which he often quoted in those splendid lonely days at Khartoum, were the lines taken from Browning's "Paracelsus"—

> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not: but unless God send His hail
> Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
> In some time, His good time, I shall arrive:
> He guides me and the bird.

[1] W. J. Dawson.

4. But there is a greater sorrow here. In some way, mysterious but most assured, He had to make the guilt of the sin of mankind His own. He had to take the sinner's place—his place as a sinner—and accept the burden of his sinfulness. His agony becomes intelligible only when we accept His own explanation of all His suffering and woe, that He had come to give His life a ransom for many, and to shed His blood for the remission of their sins. In other words, He had come to make the sins of others His own, and to suffer and die as if He had committed them, and as if the guilt and the penalty of them were His.

How Jesus could assume and have this personal relation to sins not His own is the real mystery here. It must ever be, like much else in His Divine human being, largely beyond our finite thought. It goes so far to explain it that He was the Son of Man, and that in this unique character He could be for men what no other could possibly be. As the God-man He was related to humanity, to its burden and its destiny, as no other could be. He was its head and representative. As such He could, while sinless Himself, make the sin, the agony, and the conflict of our fallen race His own. The suffering and the death which this involved He as the second Adam underwent, not for His own sake, but for the sake of humanity, that all might issue in salvation. Thus far the Incarnation throws light upon Gethsemane and Calvary. It did not merely add another to the number of our race, but it gave a new Divine centre or head to it, and one in whose personal history the agony and conflict of humanity because of sin might be endured and brought to the victory of redemption.

It affords us, also, a new revelation of God, showing Him in the glory of His grace. We can understand charity and self-denying beneficence meeting the results of evil in this world—the poverty, misery, and suffering it has caused—with their bounty and all the services and forms of self-sacrifice possible to them; but here is philanthropy on the Son of Man's part going so far as to deal with the evil itself and all its demerit and guiltiness, its relations to the moral order of the universe, and to the claims and glory of God. For Divine love to relate itself to human need and suffering, and to multiply its offices

of charity in relieving them is a great thing; but for Divine love to clothe itself with the shame and guilt of the sufferers and make their cause its own is another and an infinitely greater thing. For God's Son to come into the midst of suffering men that He might share their ills and sorrows, and provide them with comforts and abatements, would reveal a beautiful compassion and beneficence. But for Him to descend from His Divine throne, step into the sinner's place, and suffer Himself to be numbered with the transgressors, bearing their burden and blame—this is grace beyond all we can conceive of grace.

5. But what is it that makes it so hard for Him to have to take the sinner's place? It is that the sinner is an outcast from God. Sin has broken the communion. And now He who was spoken of as the beloved Son has to bear the Father's displeasure and feel the unutterable pain of separation. No wonder He prayed, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." For that glory was to be loved by the Father: "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The Father loves Him still and will glorify Him again. But now He feels that He is about to be separated. One with the sinner in his sin, He must feel that He is separate from the Father in His holiness. The Agony in the Garden is the cry on the cross—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It casts its dark shadow before. If He accepts the Cup now He will go through it all, even though when the moment comes that cry may yet be wrung from Him.

Imagine the evil of the world being felt by Him as a mighty burden, and that feeling gathering and deepening until over His frail humanity it rolled like a flood,—the sense of the world's sin cleaving to Him, the sense of the world's woe rousing Him to compassion till its mighty mass seemed to be tearing Him from God, and the awful cry came at last, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Add to this the mystery of His Divinity—the Divine capacity of sorrow within the human form—and who can tell what suffering His soul knew? Who can tell the horror of darkness and the shuddering agony of

pity that thrilled Him as the cry burst forth, "O my Father, let this cup pass from me"?

¶ To bear the weight of sin, and by it to feel cut off from the communion with God which is Life Eternal—this is the one thing absolutely unbearable. We sinners know it, if ever we have felt what men call remorse for our own sin, or for its consequences, which we would give worlds to undo—if ever we know what it is to struggle with all our might against the bondage of conscious sinfulness, and to struggle in vain. The sense that sin has gained an absolute mastery over us, and that in the darkness of its bondage God's face of love is hidden from us for ever, and the unwilling terrors of His wrath let loose upon our unsheltered heads—which of us would not count light in comparison the very keenest agony of body and soul? You remember how St. Paul cries out under it, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But this sense of our own sin is but a faint shadow of the burden on our Lord's spirit of bearing, in the mysterious power of Atonement, the sins of the whole world—"made" (as St. Paul boldly expresses it) "sin for us," entering even into the spiritual darkness which cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[1]

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little grey leaves were kind to Him,
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content;
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came.[2]

[1] Bishop Barry.

[2] Sidney Lanier.

III.

His Acceptance of the Father's Will.

"Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt."

1. *Not what I will.*—It was His meat and drink, as He Himself has told us, to do His Father's will and to finish His work. We can understand Him doing the will of His Father with gladness when, in accordance with it, He had miracles to perform, Divine blessings to spread abroad, and His own perfectly pure and good life to live. We can also understand Him bravely doing it when, with His soul which loathed evil and every kind of wrong, He bore up unflinchingly against the wrongs and the evils with which He was Himself assailed. But Jesus' subjection went far beyond this when He took the cross from His Father's hand, and meekly said as He did so in Gethsemane, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

The consent of His will was absolutely necessary. So He said Himself of His life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." That consent, again, was needed at every point. At any moment His own words might have been realised, "Cannot I pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" That consent, further, had to be given under a perfect fore-knowledge of all that it implied—every pang of suffering, every cruelty of triumphant evil. In these points, as in all others, His was the one perfect sacrifice, laying a will, itself absolutely free, at the feet of His Father. Doubtless we may follow Him—we must follow Him—but it is afar off.

¶ We read of a martyr of the English Reformation, before whose eyes at the stake was held up the pardon which awaited his recantation; and who cried out in an agony which he found fiercer than the fire itself, "If ye love my soul, away with it." And the secret of such agony, as also the essence of sacrifice, lies in the submission of the will—in the subjection of that mysterious power, which in man, weak and finite as he is, can be (so God wills it) overcome by no force except its own. "Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldest not. Then said I, Lo! I come to do thy will, O God." I am content to do it.[1]

[1] Bishop Barry.

What a contrast within the space of a few hours! What a transition from the quiet elevation of that, "he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father! I will," to that falling on the ground and crying in agony, "My Father! not what I will." In the one we see the High Priest within the veil in His all-prevailing intercession; in the other, the sacrifice on the altar opening the way through the rent veil. The high-priestly "Father! I will," in order of time precedes the sacrificial "Father! not what I will"; but this was only by anticipation, to show what the intercession would be when once the sacrifice was brought. In reality it was that prayer at the altar, "Father! not what I will," in which the prayer before the throne, "Father! I will," had its origin and its power. It is from the entire surrender of His will in Gethsemane that the Hight Priest on the throne has the power to ask what He will, has the right to make His people share in that power too, and ask what they will.

2. *What Thou wilt.*—Out of that agony—borne through the power of intense prayer of supplication—came forth submission to the will of the Father. Not the acceptance of an inevitable fate, against which it is vain, and therefore foolish to strive—such as a mere Fatalist or Cynic might show. But the submission, first, of a perfect faith—sure that whatever our Father ordains must be well—sure that He will not suffer one tear or pang that is not needed for Salvation—sure that whatever He lays on us, He will give us comfort and strength to bear. "Not my will, but Thine be done—Thine the all-wise—Thine the all-merciful—Thine the almighty will." But, even beyond this, there is the submission of love. There is an actual delight in sacrifice of self for those we love, which, in the world as it is, makes men count inevitable suffering as joy, and, out of that suffering for others actually begets a fresh access of love to them, which is itself an exaltation and a comfort.

¶ Christ's prayer was not for the passing of the cup, but that the will of God might be done in and by Him, and "He was heard in that he feared," not by being exempted from the Cross, but by being strengthened through submission for submission. So His agony is the pattern of all true prayer, which must ever deal with our wishes, as He did with His instinctive shrinking,—

present them wrapped in an "if it be possible," and followed by a "nevertheless." The meaning of prayer is not to force our wills on God's, but to bend our wills to His; and that prayer is really answered of which the issue is our calm readiness for all that He lays upon us.[1]

3. It is best so. The cup did not pass from Him because it was not possible; but yet in two ways, far above our ways, His prayer was granted. It was granted first of all—(the whole history of the Passion proves it)—it was granted in the heavenly strength that was given to Him to bear all the pains and sorrows that were laid upon Him. As afterwards He said to His great Apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee," so, now, God's grace was sufficient for Him. There appeared, we are told, an angel from heaven strengthening Him; and in the power of that strength He rose from His knees, no longer sorrowful, no longer bowed down with terror and trouble, but calm and cheerful, ready to go forth and meet His enemies, ready to bear all the taunts and pains of His trial and crucifixion, ready to answer a good confession before Pontius Pilate, and to pray for His brothers, and to think of His mother and friend, and of His companions in woe, and to look back on the finishing of His mighty work, and to commend His soul to His Father—more majestic, more adorable, more Divine than He had ever seemed before.

Let us fix our thoughts on that second and yet grander mode in which our Lord's petition was answered, even according to those sacred words of His own, which are the model of all prayer, which are the key and secret of this Divine tragedy—"Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." That is the sum and substance of the whole narrative of the Passion. Not the substitution of the will of Christ for the will of the eternal God, but the substitution of the will of the eternal God for the will even of His most dearly beloved Son.

¶ There is a friend of mine, a dear and brilliant friend, whose name would be honoured by you all if I were free to mention it. He told me the other day the darkest chapter of his life. He told me how his whole life lay suddenly broken off in disaster: his work ended, his heart broken, himself in hospital suffering

[1] A. Maclaren.

cruel pain. And then he said: "Oh, Dawson, what visions of God I had as I lay in hospital! what a sense of eternity, and the reality of things spiritual! I tell you, if I knew to-day I could gain such visions of God and truth only by repeating my sufferings, I would crawl upon my hands and knees across this continent to get that disease!" Ah! there lies the justification of our Gethsemanes. We need the utter loneliness, we need the separation from friend and lover, to make us sure of God. "And Jacob was left alone," says the older record: "and there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day." Even so—till *the breaking of the day*, for the divinest of all dawns shines in the Gethsemane of sacrifice.[1]

4. How blessed was the Result. He prayed His way to perfect calm, which is ever the companion of perfect self-surrender to God. They who cease from their own works do "enter into rest." All the agitations which had come storming in massed battalions against Him are defeated by it. They have failed to shake His purpose, they now fail even to disturb His peace. So, victorious from the dreadful conflict, and at leisure of heart to care for others, He can go back to the disciples.

And so you find that from this moment Jesus moves to His end in majestic calm. The agony is passed, and it is passed for ever; He knows the darkness to be but the shadow of God's wing. He speaks henceforth as one who sees the dawn, and has the light of dawn upon His brow.

And how great is the Encouragement. Christ's agony is the very consecration of human suffering, the fresh spring of human hope. There is no depth into which we can be plunged that He has not fathomed, no gloom into which we can be cast that He has not illumined. There are trials harder to bear even than death itself, but Christ has known their bitterness, and if we recognise the source of sin from which they first flowed, He can turn those bitter waters into rivers of comfort.

¶ We very properly distinguish in ourselves two wills, the one of natural inclination, the instinctive will, if you please; the other the deliberate purpose and choice of the moral and rational nature. Our first effort must be the complete surrender of our deliberate rational will to God, to work ever in submission to His gracious ordering for our lives. Then the constant discipline of

[1] W. J. Dawson.

the Christian life becomes the stern struggle to subdue the will of natural inclination and to bring it a captive to our Lord. This is the sacrifice we have to offer Him, a feeble counterpart in our small way, of the heroic self-sacrifice He offered that day in Gethsemane.[1]

I know, O Jesus, in the bitter hour
Of human pain, that Thou hast felt the power
Of deeper anguish, and my lips are still,
Because in silence Thou hast borne God's will.[2]

Christ in Prayer.

What is prayer? It is to connect every thought with the thought of God. To look on everything as His work and His appointment. To submit every thought, wish, and resolve to Him. To feel His presence, so that it shall restrain us even in our wildest joy. That is prayer. And what we are now, surely we are by prayer. If we have attained any measure of goodness, if we have resisted temptations, if we have any self-command, or if we live with aspirations and desires beyond the common, we shall not hesitate to ascribe all to prayer.

1. Christ is an Example in prayer. There is many a case in life, where to act seems useless—many a truth which at times appears incredible. Then we throw ourselves on Him—He did it, He believed it, that is enough. He was wise, where I am foolish. He was holy, where I am evil. He must know. He must be right. I rely on Him. Bring what arguments you may; say that prayer cannot change God's will. I know it. Say that prayer ten thousand times comes back like a stone. Yes, but Christ prayed, therefore I may and I will pray. Not only so, but I *must* pray; the wish felt and not uttered before God, is a prayer. Speak, if your heart prompts, in articulate words, but there is an unsyllabled wish which is also prayer. You cannot help praying, if God's spirit is in yours.

2. Christ's Prayer is an Example of what prayer is. A common popular conception of prayer is, that it is the means by which the wish of man determines the Will of God. This conception finds an exact parallel in those anecdotes with which Oriental history abounds, wherein a sovereign gives to his

[1] A. Ritchie. [2] E. H. Divall, *The Ways of God*, 22.

favourite some token, on the presentation of which every request must be granted. As when Ahasuerus promised Queen Esther that her petition should be granted, even to the half of his kingdom. As when Herod swore to Herodias' daughter that he would do whatever she should require.

(1) Try this conception by four tests:

(*a*) Try it by its incompatibility with the fact that this universe is a system of laws. Things are thus, rather than thus. Such an event is invariably followed by such a consequence. This we call a law. All is one vast chain, from which if you strike a single link you break the whole. It has been truly said that to heave a pebble on the seashore one yard higher up would change all antecedents from the creation, and all consequents to the end of time. For it would have required a greater force in the wave that threw it there—and that would have required a different degree of strength in the storm—that again, a change of temperature all over the globe—and that again, a corresponding difference in the temperaments and characters of the men inhabiting the different countries. So that when a child wishes a fine day for his morrow's excursion, and hopes to have it by an alteration of what would have been without his wish, he desires nothing less than a whole new universe.

(*b*) Try it next by fact. Ask those of spiritual experience. We do not ask whether prayer has been efficacious—of course it has. It is God's ordinance. Without prayer the soul dies. But what we ask is, whether the good derived has been exactly this, that prayer brought them the very thing they wished for? For instance, did the plague come and go according to the laws of prayer or the laws of health? Did it come because men neglected prayer, or because they disobeyed those rules which His wisdom has revealed as the conditions of salubrity? And when it departed was it because a nation lay prostrate in sackcloth and ashes, or because it arose and girded up its loins and removed those causes and those obstructions which, by everlasting Law, are causes and obstructions? Did the catarrh or the consumption go from him who prayed, sooner than from him who humbly bore it in silence? Try it by the case of Christ—Christ's prayer did not succeed. He prayed that the cup might pass from Him. It did not so pass.

(*c*) Try it by its assumptions. To think that prayer changes God's will, gives unworthy ideas of God. It supposes our will to be better than His, the Unchangeable, the Unsearchable, the All-Wise. Can you see the All of things—the consequences and secret connections of the event you wish? And if not, would you really desire the terrible power of infallibly securing it?

(*d*) Try it by its results. If we think that answered prayer is a proof of grace, we shall be unreasonably depressed and unreasonably elated—depressed when we do not get what we wish, elated when we do; besides, we shall judge uncharitably of other men. Two farmers pray, the one whose farm is on light land, for rain; the other, whose contiguous farm is on heavy soil, for fine weather; plainly one or the other must come, and that which is good for one may be injurious to the other. If this be the right view of prayer, then the one who does not obtain his wish must mourn, doubting God's favour, or believing that he did not pray in faith. Two Christian armies meet for battle—Christian men on both sides pray for success to their own arms. Now if victory be given to prayer, independent of other considerations, we are driven to the pernicious principle that success is the test of Right. From all which the history of this prayer of Christ delivers us. It is a precious lesson of the Cross, that apparent failure is Eternal victory. It is a precious lesson of this prayer, that the object of prayer is not the success of its petition; nor is its rejection a proof of failure. Christ's petition was not gratified, yet He was the One well-beloved of His Father.

(2) The true efficacy of prayer is found in the words, "As thou wilt." All prayer is to change the will human into submission to the will Divine. Trace the steps in this history by which the mind of the Son of Man arrived at this result. First, we find the human wish almost unmodified, that "That cup might pass from Him." Then He goes to the disciples, and it would appear that the sight of those disciples, cold, unsympathetic, asleep, chilled His spirit, and set in motion that train of thought which suggested the idea that perhaps the passing of that cup was not His Father's will. At all events He goes back with this perhaps, "If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He goes back again, and the words

become more strong: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The last time He comes, all hesitancy is gone. Not one trace of the human wish remains; strong in submission, He goes to meet His doom—"Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray me." This, then, is the true course and history of prayer.[1]

He prayed, but to his prayer no answer came,
And choked within him sank his ardour's flame;
No more he prayed, no more the knee he bent,
While round him darkened doubt and discontent;
Till in his room, one eve, there shone a light,
And he beheld an angel-presence bright,
Who said: "O faint heart, why hast thou resigned
Praying, and no more callest God to mind?"
"I prayed," he said, "but no one heard my prayer,
Long disappointment has induced despair."
"Fool!" said the angel, "every prayer of thine,
Of God's immense compassion was a sign;
Each cry of thine 'O Lord!' itself contains
The answer, 'Here am I'; thy very pains,
Ardour, and love and longing, every tear
Are His attraction, prove Him very near."
The cloud dispersed; once more the suppliant prayed,
Nor ever failed to find the promised aid.[2]

[1] F. W. Robertson.

[2] Jalaluddin Rumi, in Claud Field's *A Little Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 49.

Watch and Pray.

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WATCH AND PRAY.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.—xiv. 38.

THESE words of Jesus, spoken in the Garden of Gethsemane, by their very association with His tragic experience in that place, have an extraordinary impressiveness. That solemn night and that succession of memorable events—the Supper at which bread and wine became sacramental and symbolical with an imperishable meaning; the walk from the city across the brook Kedron, along a way here, perhaps, illumined by the pale light of a waning moon, there darkly shadowed by massive wall or thick-leaved olive tree; the pause in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Master's withdrawal and mysterious agony; the flaring torches and multitudinous tread of the Temple police, accompanied by the Roman cohort which Judas guided; the arrest, the hurried mockery of a trial, and the overwhelming fear and doubt, sickening into despair, that oppressed the disciples as the strange drama hastened to its close in the Crucifixion—these are inseparably associated with these words: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Their setting makes them vivid and unforgettable. It gives them, too, an added urgency, as if something of the anguish that wrung the praying lips of Christ still clung to His speech.

How sad the Saviour's heart was under the olive trees the disciples could not know; but the sadness was deepened when, coming back to them for a moment, He found them so little like Himself as to be all asleep. A sin of infirmity, no doubt; but what a revelation of the infinite distance separating them from Him! This sleep could perhaps be explained, naturally enough, by reaction of mind after the tense excitement of the day—the passover and supper in the upper room, the long

discourse, the wonderful prayer they heard Him offer, the hymn they had sung together, the walk in the darkness to the garden, and the slumberous murmurs of the night wind in the olive trees; and yet it takes us by surprise. We could have expected something better than this. The Master evidently expected something better too. Even His generous excuse for them does not hide His disappointment. Even the palliation that they were "sleeping for sorrow" does not hide it either, for there is an accent of surprise in His words, "Why sleep ye?" "Simon, sleepest *thou*?"

The words are very sorrowful and touching. They show an ineffable depth of tenderness and compassion. He uttered no reproach, no sharp complaint, at their unseasonable slumber; but only, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" and He turned away all thought from Himself to them; and, for their own sakes, bade them "watch and pray," for that their trial was at hand. In this we have a wonderful example of the love of Christ. How far otherwise we should act in such a case, we all well know. When any seem to us to be less keenly awake to the trial we may happen to be undergoing, we are above measure excited, as if some great wrong were done to us. There is nothing we resent so much as the collected manner of those who are about us in our afflictions. If they still seem the same when we are so changed—even if they can still be natural, feel common interests, and take their wonted rest, we feel exceedingly aggrieved, and almost forget our other trial, in the kindling of a sort of resentment.

I.

Temptation.

The word "temptation" has come to be associated exclusively with that which is evil. We seldom speak of tempting a man to good. There is a colloquial use of the word, as when the lady of the house, presiding over her dinner-table, on which, more as an adornment than for use, are various mysterious confections, asks her guest, "Cannot I tempt you with a little of this soufflé?" in which case the word has a

suggestion in it that there is a debate in the mind of her guest as to the wisdom of making an experiment with something of doubtful and mysterious character. Ordinarily, however, the word temptation conveys the idea of inducement in the direction of that which is evil.

The exhortation to watch and pray implies that there is danger. And danger there is on all sides of us. There is (1) the danger of letting our opportunities slip—our opportunities of improvement, our opportunities of laying up treasure in heaven, our opportunities of benefiting those we love, our opportunities of promoting our Master's glory — and therefore we must watch. There is (2) the danger of our being corrupted, and of the Church being corrupted, by false teachers—the danger of false doctrine arising and spreading, and we are to watch and stand fast in the faith. There is (3) the danger of being drawn away of our own lust and enticed, and we are to watch—keeping our hearts with all diligence, and keeping under the body. There is (4) the danger of becoming wordly-minded—the danger of being overcharged with the cares of this life, of being deceived by riches, of giving our hearts to the world, and we are to watch. There is (5) the danger of being deceived and overcome by the many spiritual enemies who compass us about, and the danger of being devoured by the great adversary who goeth about like a roaring lion, and therefore we are to be vigilant—we are to watch. And lastly and chiefly, there is (6) the danger of being found unprepared by our Master at His coming, and we are exhorted again and again to watch for His return.

1. The need of Watchfulness comes from *the subtlety and the surprise* of temptation. Opportunities of promoting our own spiritual progress, the good of others, and God's glory, often present themselves unexpectedly, and just as unexpectedly pass away, and therefore we must watch. Errors in doctrine or in practice frequently arise from a very small beginning, and from what appears harmless in itself, and often have taken deep root and spread widely before men have discovered their true nature; and therefore we must watch. Very frequently, too, temptation presents itself at an unexpected time, and in an unexpected

form, and we must watch. And then our enemies are ever surprising us. They come suddenly and without the slightest note of warning. They may attack us on our right hand or on our left, and that at any moment, for we see them not. And then they come ever in disguise, and are constantly approaching us in some new dress. Their weapons, too, they are constantly changing, and their mode of attack; and they are ever watching for favourable opportunities, and are constantly attacking us when we are least prepared for them. And they are many—their name is legion; they are powerful—they are subtle—they are malignant—they are unsparing. Surely we ought to watch—not being ignorant of Satan's devices. He seizes upon every favourable opportunity, and we ought to watch. Esau was returning from the field, faint, for he had long fasted; he saw his brother preparing pottage, and thought not of an enemy; but the enemy was there, and, taking advantage of this opportunity, with his brother's tongue asked him to sell his birthright. He sold it—and then he felt that an enemy, the great enemy, had done it. But his birthright was gone—for ever gone. He sought to have it restored, but never could regain it, though he sought it carefully and with tears.

¶ I suppose all you boys have read *Baxter's Second Innings.* In that fascinating little book every boy is represented as a batsman who is being bowled at with various sorts of bowling—"swifts," "slows," and "screws." The object is, of course, to find out where is his weak point, to get past his defence, and lay low his wickets, which are honour, truth, and purity. The boy's only chance of playing a strong sound game is to watch every ball very closely. The danger is always that he will get careless and slack; and then, in the moment when he is taking it easy, in comes a swift ball when he was counting on a slow one, and in consequence he comes to grief. You remember the illustration which Henry Drummond gives, in the book, of a boy who, being off his guard for a moment, yields to a swift and sudden temptation, and says what is not true. Sometimes a false word slips off the tongue in this way, which you would give a whole term's pocket-money to recall. You did not remember to do what the Bible suggests—put a watch upon the lips.[1]

¶ Sometimes boys and girls, and men and women, keep steady watch against the big faults, but let the little ones go unheeded.

[1] C. S. Horne.

Do you remember Baxter's surprise when his captain reminds him that he has to guard something besides wickets. "What?" says Baxter. "Bails," says the captain. Now, bails are very little things; but if the bowler succeeds in removing a bail the batsman has come to grief as much as if his middle stump had been uprooted. You must not talk as if the little faults do not matter. They do. They are "the little foxes that spoil the vines." You must try to guard all your life from temptation. Blessed is he that watcheth and prayeth; that never sleeps at his post; that never suffers, and *causes others to suffer*, from his neglect of duty.[1]

¶ One time, when our soldiers were fighting against Indians in America, a sentry at a very important point was found one morning dead at his post. The guard had heard no sound, and they could not imagine how any one could have come so close to the sentry as to kill him. They thought he must have fallen asleep at his post. Another man was put in his place, and next morning he too was found dead there. So the officer selected a sharp man, and said to him: "Now, let nothing escape you. Shoot at anything that moves. If a dog goes by, shoot him." For an hour or two the man heard nothing stirring. But at last a little twig snapped, and it seemed as if something were softly treading on dry leaves. The sentry's heart beat fast, and he strained his eyes, but could see nothing. After a second or two he was certain something *was* coming near to him. He called out, "Who goes there?" but no one answered. The next moment he saw something black and was going to fire, but noticed that it was a small bear moving near a bush a few yards off. So he lowered his rifle, and was going to laugh at himself at the thought of how near he had been to raising an alarm about a little bear. But suddenly the sentry remembered the words, "Shoot anything that moves, whatever it is!" and he lifted his rifle and let go at the bear. The bear fell, and the guard ran to where they had heard the report. On examining the bear they found it was a bear's skin with a wounded Indian inside it. This Indian, night after night, had approached the sentry, crawling along the ground in the dark skin of the bear, and when near enough had suddenly sprung up and killed him.[2]

¶ I remember a storm that raged over the country some years ago, and that tore up by the roots and levelled to the ground thousands upon thousands of trees in the central counties of Scotland. And the strange thing about it was this: that, although the wind was undoubtedly very strong, yet it was not one bit stronger than the wind of many a previous storm which

[1] C. S. Horne. [2] S. Gregory.

these trees, now so numerously uprooted, had successfully withstood. Why, then, did they fall on this occasion? The answer is, that the wind came from an unusual quarter. It was a storm from the north-west, a direction from which a gale comparatively rarely blows. Had it come from any other quarter of the compass, these trees, accustomed to it, would have remained firmly fixed in the soil; but it assailed them on a side on which they had not sufficiently rooted, and so had not sufficiently guarded themselves.[1]

2. The need of watchfulness and prayer springs from the *manifoldness* as well as the subtlety of temptation. Temptation is made possible by what is in a man, and it is made real by what is about a man. The susceptibilities to it live within him; the incitements, provocations, inducements, live around him, as it were, in the very air he breathes. It is the adaptation of the outer to the inner, and the openness or sensibility of the inner to the outer, that constitutes the strength of temptation and creates the need of watchfulness. The sentinel eye must be at once outward and inward, prospective and introspective, jealous lest the inner and the outer enemy secretly meet, suddenly agree, and immediately seize and defile the citadel of the soul. The inner conditions that make it possible and the outer forms that make it actual may be reduced to three classes or kinds—social, moral, and intellectual.

(1) It is a fact of experience, if anything is, that while there are many temptations which beset us all, there is generally *one which our own individual nature is specially inclined to*; which, if we give way to it, seems, as it were, to swallow up all other temptations. At least, if we examine the other temptations, they seem all to converge on the one point; their distinctive character is lost in that of the "besetting sin," just as when the plague raged at Athens, all other diseases, we are told, seemed to lead up to and to end in it. What that besetting sin is, each must find out for himself and, having found it out, *watch*.

¶ The temptations which we encounter vary according to our temperament and situation. Some seem to seek us, as if there were a diabolical intention lurking in our environment. It is not difficult to account for man's belief in a personal devil and evil

[1] J. Aitchison.

spirits. Some temptations seem to rise within us out of the darkness that underlies consciousness. We cannot account for them. They grapple us unawares. They are like foes that fire upon us from some hiding-place within our citadel. Bunyan's description of an experience which Christian had while passing through "the valley of the shadow of death," while exaggerated and almost fantastic, has in it, nevertheless, a note of reality. "I took notice," he says, "that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it: Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning Pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything he had met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he loved so much before; yet if he could have helped it, he would not have done it. But he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears nor to know from whence those blasphemies came."[1]

¶ Enter not—εἰσέλθητε—suggests a territory of temptation to be specially avoided, where the force of allurements to sin is particularly felt, and where the flesh is peculiarly weak. The petition, "Lead us not into temptation," suggests a similar thought, as also the language about our Lord's being led up or driven into the wilderness to be tempted, as though even He would not venture unbidden upon such dangerous ground. There certainly is such territory, and it is found wherever the world, the flesh, or the devil is specially prominent and dominant. Hence the emphatic warnings against these three foes.[2]

Lead me, O Lord,
  In still, safe places;
Let mine eyes meet
  Sweet, earnest faces;
Far from the scenes
  Of wordly fashion,
Of faithless care,
  And noisy passion.[3]

(2) Again, experience has taught us that in the spiritual combat *we cannot be too watchful against those sins which we think we have no temptation to commit.* It is by these that the penitent too often falls. St. Peter knew he was impetuous and impulsive and impatient; but unfaithful to his Lord he *could*

[1] P. S. Moxom. [2] A. T. Pierson. [3] M. F. Butts.

not be. "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." And ere the cock crowed, he wept bitterly over a bitter fall. Satan may be a very wicked being, but he is a wonderfully good general. He is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, nor omnipresent, but he can use his opportunities. He will not long waste his power on the part which you know is weak, where all your sentries have been doubled, but he will turn to that where you think yourself secure, where you never have been attacked. So it was that the virgin fortress of Babylon fell before the conquering Cyrus. The walls were manned, the sentinels were at their posts, every attack failed; yet secretly—no watch was set where Euphrates and the brazen gates seemed to mock at danger—the enemy entered and surprised the citadel.[1]

¶ There are temptations that we seek. We put ourselves in their way, either perversely and with the nascent intention to indulge in sin; or, since they lie in the pathway of some worthy enterprise, with the determination to take the risk for the sake of the end; or, ignorantly and heedlessly, with our foolish eyes closed to danger.[2]

¶ "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." This was spoken in reference to a nation, but it is also applicable to him who seeks to be God's free man in earth or heaven. We cannot train our spiritual eyes too keenly to see the danger in supposedly unimportant things, which may open the doors of temptation and lead to ruin. In training the inner eye we should learn to observe that which is significant in a reconnoitre and relate it to our safety. A young Western farmer frequented the village bar-room and hitched his team by the saloon. After his conversion he never visited the bar-room, but continued to hitch his team in the same place. The trained and watchful eye of a good old deacon noticed this, and after congratulating the youth upon his conversion said: "George, I am a good deal older than you, and will be pardoned, I know, if I make a suggestion out of my wider Christian experience. No matter how strong you think you are, take my advice and at once change your hitching-post."[3]

(3) Again, experience has taught us to be especially watchful *when any special effort has been made, or any victory won* by the power of God in us, when we have felt

[1] A. L. Moore. [2] P. S. Moxom. [3] C. R. Ross.

God's nearness, and been for the moment lifted up above the ordinary life of conflict. Our greatest sins often follow closely on our highest resolutions, simply because new efforts against the enemy always stir up the enemy to new efforts against us. The very making of a resolution, and offering it to God, is an appeal against the strong one to Him who is "stronger than the strong." Even in our Blessed Lord's case, there seems to have been a mysterious connection between His fasting and His temptation. For fasting, self-restraint, self-discipline, is a preparing the soul for fight, a strengthening it against the moment of trial, and the devil fears it—feels that each act of self-restraint gives strength to what he would overcome, and his only hope is in immediate attack. The soul that fights may be overcome; the soul that prays, *never*. The sinner who loves his sin is safe in the bondage of evil,—the sinner who resolves in God's strength to fight, has already struck a blow for liberty.

¶ It is strangely full of warning to me that the three men who here could not watch for one hour were the same three who had been, more closely than any, associated with the Master many times before: who, alone of the band, had been with Him on the holy Mount, and had seen His glory there; who alone had been witnesses of His power in raising the daughter of Jairus to life; one of them, too, the man who had made loudest profession of willingness to die for Him; another, the man who most profoundly loved Him, and at the supper leaned upon His breast.[1]

II.

Watchfulness.

There is no commandment of Jesus which seems to be more frequently on His lips than this: *Watch*. If the reader will be at the pains to read the following passages in succession; Luke xxi. 34–36; Mark xiii. 33–37; Luke xii. 35–40, xxi. 8; Matt. xxvi. 40, 41; Mark xiv. 37, 38; Matt. xxiv. 42; Matt. xxv. 1–13; he will be sufficiently impressed with the insistence which the Master lays upon this difficult duty. On

[1] G. H. Knight.

this occasion the command took the form: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." In the other instances it applies to that Parousia which He foretold as a certain, though indefinite, fact.

Let us see (1) What watching demands of us; and (2) How we may watch most successfully.

i. What is it to Watch?

1. It is to *learn*. One of a man's first duties is to get acquainted with himself, to find out his tendencies and his peculiar weaknesses, and thus, his chief danger. Learn your temptabilities. Many fall because they do not know the peculiar infirmities of their own natures. Not all are tempted by the same enticements to evil or in the same degree. What tempts one may but slightly or not at all tempt another. Much of our misjudgment of men and of our lack of sympathy with them arises from our failure to recognise clearly differences of temperament and circumstances. Some men are specially vulnerable on the fleshly side. They may have generous natures, full of kindly impulses and much love of the beautiful and the good, but they are strongly sensuous and passionate. In that direction lies their chief danger. They are never tempted to be deceitful or cruel, but they are constantly tempted to be lustful. Other men are comparatively free from sensual tendencies, but they have an instinctive greed for money, and money-getting is, for them, a perilous business. They are tempted by avarice. Unconsciously they are yielding, day by day, to impulses that at last will make their hearts as hard as flint. Others are susceptible on the side of jealousy and envy, and the victories over them of their peculiar temptation are making them cruel and bitter, and driving out of their natures all love and sweetness. Here is a man who has a fiery temper. This is his vulnerable side. He lacks self-control. He is like a tinder-box, ready at a touch to burst into flame. He never premeditates evil to his fellow-men, but temptation comes, and instantly he utters the stinging word, or gives the swift blow that wounds a fellow-creature sometimes past healing. There is a woman who is weak in the instinct of truthfulness. She exaggerates easily. She does not mean to lie, but she is

tempted, and almost involuntarily her tongue weaves falsehood. The wisdom born of experience says: Learn your peculiar weakness and guard that. He is not watchful who does not watch himself. Do nothing simply because others do it. Many have sunk into moral ruin because they failed to keep the solid ground of individual safety.

2. To watch is to *avoid*. We cannot avoid all temptations; nor, probably, would it be best for us if we could. St. James says: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." This is heroic doctrine, but, evidently, by "temptations" the apostle means not merely enticements to evil, but also other forms of trial; for he goes on to show that trials develop patience, or patient endurance (*ὑπομονή*), and patience, when it is perfect, produces a fully matured character. There is a powerful ministry of good in trial. It is to character what fire is to oil, what drill and discipline are to an army. But the trials that develop character will come without our seeking. We may let Providence take care of that. The part of wisdom for us is to avoid temptations—to utter the prayer and to live in the line of its suggestion: "Lead us not into temptation." Many temptations we can avoid; and, when we are bidden to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation," we are bidden to shape our course, to choose our business, to elect our companions, to control our pleasures, our reading, and our thoughts, with a view to our peculiar tendencies or susceptibilities, so that we shall not encounter unnecessary and probably disastrous enticements to sin.

¶ One dark night I had to cross the Irish Sea. As the steamer drove along over the waves I walked the deck talking to the seamen and looking out across the dark water. One of the men told me of the great care taken to prevent accident, and he said, "At the present moment there are nine men on the look out on this vessel." Nine men were—watching![1]

3. To watch is to *resist*. Obviously, when temptation is felt and recognised, we should resist. But how many fall who meant to resist simply because they are not prompt in resisting. They dally with temptation when deliberation is both treason against

[1] S. Gregory.

God and their own souls and an invitation to defeat. He is already half conquered who begins to consider and argue. Safety lies in instant action. Never attempt to argue down a temptation. Take it by the throat, as you would a venomous serpent. Have no parleys with the tempter. Instant decision saves many a man, who, if he think the matter over, yields and is undone. It is in vain that you watch, unless you fight when the enemy comes. It is but mockery for you to post sentinels to guard the approaches to the citadel if, when the foe approaches, you pause with wide open gates to talk, for while you are debating he seizes your weapons and binds you hand and foot.

¶ Dangers are no more light, if they once seem light; and more dangers have deceived men than forced them: nay, it were better to meet some dangers half-way, though they come nothing near, than to keep too long a watch upon their approaches; for if a man watch too long, it is odds he will fall asleep.[1]

ii. The Conditions of Success in Watching.

1. *Live habitually in the Presence of God.* — There is an Oriental story of a contest between two spirits, one of the upper and the other of the lower world. So long as the conflict was maintained in the air, the evil genius lost his strength, and was easily mastered; but as soon as, in the various fortunes of the fight, he touched the earth, his strength returned, he rose to a gigantic size, and the heavens grew dark with his power. It is so with us in our conflict with evil. We do not long resist temptation when we carry on the conflict *on its own ground*; our spasmodic efforts then soon yield to its persistent pressure. It is by rising to a higher level that we gain strength, while the temptation is weakened. It is by living on this higher plane of thought, and moral purpose, that we are prepared to encounter temptation. In the season when you are led astray, had you been watching with Christ, had your mind been occupied by better thoughts and purposes, the temptation would hardly have risen up to that higher region to assail you. While the vivid apprehension of God's presence is in the mind, we are not likely to yield to the sin. Who is there that can consciously and

[1] Francis Bacon.

deliberately step over that one thought into a sin? Before we commit the wrong, that thought is put aside, and we descend to the lower level, where the temptation has its home, its associations, and its strength.

2. *Occupy yourself with His Service.*—It is said that whenever any one consecrates himself to the worship of a certain Hindu deity, the priest does a very cruel thing. He severs the nerve that enables the worshipper to shut his eyes, so that his eyes ever after remain open. It is a cruel thing to do, for God intended that the eye should have rest and that the eyelid should cover and shield it in the hour of weariness; but there is, nevertheless, a meaning in the action of the priest. It is that those who are consecrated to the service of that particular god should always be watchful and on the alert in his service. We might well learn that lesson in the service of Christ without submitting to any such treatment.

And everywhere, here and always,
If we would but open our eyes,
We should find through these beaten footpaths
Our way into Paradise.
Dull earth would be dull no longer,
The clod would sparkle—a gem;
And our hands, at their commonest labour,
Would be building Jerusalem.

III.

Prayer.

Jesus conquered *His* temptation in the garden by meeting it *with prayer*. The disciples succumbed to *their* temptation because they met it *without prayer*. In a temptation to rebellion against the Father's will, the Lord's resource was prayer. In a temptation to cowardice, that ought to have been theirs. Prayer would have made them conquerors, as it made Him; and therefore when temptation of any kind, from any quarter, in any form, at any time, comes to me, I will listen to my Master's voice, "Why sleepest thou? Rise and pray."[1]

[1] G. H. Knight.

1. Prayer offers many advantages. Relating to temptation, two are prominent.

(1) The first advantage is not a direct answer to prayer, but is found in the fact that during the prayer-moment one has time to mobilise his moral forces for battle. In the heat of temptation the fate of a character hangs on seconds. The prayer-moment offers an opportunity in which all our moral reinforcements may rush to our aid and save the day. The youth who prays before he touches his lips to the wine finds that the prayer-moment has given him a great advantage, for all the spiritual reserves within him rush forth to defend his honour. The value of the time element in the critical moment of temptation cannot be computed.

(2) The second advantage is a direct answer to prayer. In response to our request God sends us spiritual forces, for He is aware we may fall before the allurements of sin. He who walks the highway of righteousness must have Divine support. Spiritual leaders insist that too great stress cannot be placed on prayer during severe strain. Nevertheless, many who succeed in business ventures by their own ability consider themselves able to face any proposition; therefore they eliminate God and confront temptation alone. No greater mistake is possible.

Have you and I to-day
Stood silent as with Christ, apart from joy, or fray of life,
to see His face;
To look, if but a moment, in its grace,
And grow, by brief companionship, more true,
More nerved to lead, to dare, to do
For Him at any cost? Have we to-day
Found time, in thought, our hand to lay
In His, and thus compare
His will with ours, and wear
The impress of His wish? Be sure
Such contact will endure
Throughout the day; will help us walk erect
Through storm and flood; detect
Within the hidden life sin's dross, its stain;
Revive a thought of love for Him again;
Steady the steps which waver; help us see
The footpath meant for you and me.

2. We need to cultivate the habit of praying, with special reference to temptation. It is not enough that we pray when the agony of strife is upon us; we should make our special weakness the subject of constant confession and prayer. No one is so secure as he who knows his frailty, and brings it often before God in earnest petition. The lips that are most accustomed thus to pray will most quickly find utterance for the urgent cry that marks the crisis of moral struggle.

3. But prayer is more than petition; it is also communion and companionship with the Divine. It promotes familiar companionship with Christ, and this shuts out evil. Temptation has no prevailing power with him who makes every day of life a humble yet friendly walk with his God.

¶ Regarding prayer not so much as consisting of particular acts of devotion, but as the spirit of life, it seems to be the spirit of harmony with the will of God. It is the aspiration after all good, the wish, stronger than any earthly passion or desire, to live in His service only. It is the temper of mind which says in the evening, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit"; which rises up in the morning "To do Thy will, O God"; and which all the day regards the actions of business and of daily life as done unto the Lord and not to men,—"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The trivial employments, the meanest or lowest occupations, may receive a kind of dignity when thus converted into the service of God. Other men live for the most part in dependence on the opinion of their fellow-men; they are the creatures of their own interests, they hardly see anything clearly in the mists of their own self-deceptions. But he whose mind is resting in God rises above the petty aims and interests of men; he desires only to fulfil the Divine Will, he wishes only to know the truth. His "eye is single," in the language of Scripture, and his whole body is full of light. The light of truth and disinterestedness flows into his soul; the presence of God, like the sun in the heavens, warms his heart. Such a one, whom I have imperfectly described, may be no mystic; he may be one among us whom we know not, undistinguished by any outward mark from his fellow-men, yet carrying within him a hidden source of truth and strength and peace.[1]

[1] Benjamin Jowett.

IV.

Watch and Pray.

We are commanded both to watch and to pray. And there are some people who believe in doing one thing, but not the other. They believe in watching, but not in praying. These are so-called men of the world. They go to business every day, and are very keen in dealing with others. They are always on their guard against being taken in, and pride themselves on their watchfulness. When they retire at night, I have no doubt that they rejoice over the fact that no one has been able to take them in, and sometimes, I fear, they pride themselves in having watched their opportunity and taken somebody else in. There are many who believe in watching in that sense.

Then there are those who believe in praying, but not watching. They do not believe in being on the alert, and thus using the power of watchfulness which God has given them; but they can pray by the hour. Now, our Lord would have these two things united, "Watch and pray." There is, no doubt, much need of watchfulness in life, for there are dangers on every hand, and if there is need of watchfulness in daily life, there is still more need of it with regard to our spiritual life.[1]

¶ Prayer without watching is hypocrisy, and watching without prayer is presumption.[2]

¶ He who watches constantly *looks out* for danger, and avoids the way that leads to it. He who prays *looks up* for higher help and strength.[3]

¶ A man who had been a missionary in Asia once told me this incident. One day, while travelling over a desolate stretch of country, he observed, just beyond an abrupt bend of the road before him, a flock of sheep huddled about a shepherd so close that they pressed against his legs. My friend was puzzled by the sight at first, but as he passed a large mass of rock that had obstructed his gaze, he saw, at a little distance down the road, a huge Asiatic wolf, gaunt and hungry, that looked with greedy eyes on the sheep, but shrank back in fear of the shepherd with his knotty staff. The trembling flock knew the place of safety.[4]

¶ A pupil was remarkable for repeating her lessons well. Her schoolfellow, rather idly inclined, said to her one day, "How

[1] D. Davies. [2] W. Jay. [3] A. T. Pierson. [4] P. S. Moxom.

is it that you always say your lessons so perfectly?" She replied, "I always pray that I may say my lessons well." "Do you?" said the other; "well then, I will pray, too": but alas! the next morning she could not repeat even a word of her usual task. Very much confounded, she ran to her friend, and reproached her as deceitful: "I prayed," said she, "but I could not say a single word of my lesson." "Perhaps," rejoined the other, "you took no pains to learn it." "Learn it! Learn it! I did not learn it at all," answered the first. "I thought I had no occasion to learn it, when I prayed that I might say it."

Work while it is called to-day,
Watch and pray!
With both thine hands right earnestly,
As in sight of God most high,
Thy calling ply.

Watch! it is the Master calls thee;
Pray! it is His ear that hears;
Up! shake off thy chilly fears!
Mindful that whate'er befalls thee
Leaves thee further on thy way,
Watch and pray.

Watch! for demons haunt around thee,
Sin and harm beset thy path;
Yet be sure that nothing hath
Power to hinder or confound thee,
So thou faithfully alway
Watch and pray.

Pray! lest watching make thee weary;
Praying thou shalt never fail,
Though the night be long and dreary,
Though the dawn be faint and pale,
Brightens fast the perfect day:
Watch and pray.[1]

[1] H. G. Tomkins.

Bearing Christ's Cross.

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BEARING CHRIST'S CROSS.

And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross.—xv. 21.

ART and legend have done not a little to fill up the pathetic picture for us of our Lord's carrying His cross to Calvary. But the Evangelists have not been altogether silent on the subject. Doubtless much occurred on the way which the Christian world would gladly have known, and which they could so well have told us. Two of them at least, St. Matthew and St. John, were in all probability eye and ear witnesses; and St. Mark and St. Luke must have often heard Apostles and others, for whom the day of Jesus' death would have an imperishable memory, telling of all they had that day seen and heard. Yet how sparing of incidents they have been except where their Master was specially concerned. St. John, at any rate, who was a witness of the trial in Caiaphas' house, was not likely to have been absent from the crowd that saw his Master going with His burden of shame to the place where He was to die. He must have been a keen and deeply interested observer of all that took place on the way. He must have had incidents and impressions of the scene stored up in his mind and memory which he would retain to his dying day, and which the Church would willingly have possessed. But from him we have not even one. He has nothing to add to what the other three Evangelists have given. Each of those three has preserved for us the story of Simon of Cyrene, and of his touching service to Jesus; the third, the Evangelist St. Luke, has added that of the weeping of the women. These two incidents are all that are recorded of a scene on which the Christian imagination has ever fondly dwelt.

The Evangelists have told their story as honest, simple-

minded men to whom the truth was dearer than their lives. There is nothing more marked than the contrast between their rapid, and sometimes bare, mention of facts and the string of legends, piled up with miraculous events, of other writers. Here, at this tragic stage of the progress to Calvary, was an opportunity, had they wished it, of intensifying the drama by giving prominence to the touching picture of this unknown Simon and Christ. But no, the central figure to them is Christ; they are too eager to follow Him to the end to think of pausing by the way. From their ample stores of knowledge and experience they have selected just what was needed to fulfil their great purpose in writing, which was to lift up Christ crucified, worthily and as He really was, to the view of the world through all ages.

¶ Have you ever thought what a number of people there are whose names we know, and in whom we are interested, but of whom we should never have heard if they had not had something to do with Christ? At this time of day, the names of kings and governors, say of Herod and Pontius Pilate, might indeed have been known to a few scholars and students, but who outside of the circle of the learned would have known of their existence save for the fact that they crossed Christ's path? Even men and women who made a great stir in their own day would have been utterly forgotten if it had not been that their names are mentioned along with that of Christ, or along with those of His Apostles. But of course this strikes us more when we think of those people who were quite obscure, and who led quite unnoticed lives in their own generation, but whose names are embalmed in the Gospel history, and who, though never heard of during their lifetime outside their native town or their small circle of friends, are quite well known now over the whole Christian world. Is it not strange that we to-day should be interesting ourselves in a humble man belonging to a town in the north of Africa, who lived nearly two thousand years ago, and all because, by what seems the merest accident, he happened to meet Christ on the way to Calvary, and was forced to carry His cross for a few minutes in the hot noontide sun?[1]

We may consider the subject in three parts—

I. Simon the Cross-Bearer.
II. Christ the Sin-Bearer.
III. Simon and Christ.

[1] E. B. Speirs.

I.

Simon the Cross-Bearer.

i. Simon the Cyrenian.

Who was he? What does history tell us about him? Beyond his name, the name of his native town, the name of his two sons, and this one fact that he helped to carry Christ's cross, we know absolutely nothing, at least with any certainty, of this man Simon; and yet that little is quite enough to make him interesting to us.

1. Cyrene received a Jewish settlement in the time of Ptolemy I., and the Jews formed an influential section of the inhabitants. At Jerusalem the name of Cyrene was associated with one of the synagogues (Acts vi. 9), and Jewish inhabitants of Cyrenaica were among the worshippers at the Feast of Pentecost in the year of the Crucifixion (Acts ii. 10), whilst a Lucius of Cyrene appears among the prophets and teachers of the Church of Antioch about A.D. 48 (Acts xiii. 1). Whether this Simon had become a resident at Jerusalem, or whether he was a visitor at the Passover, it is impossible to decide. St. Mark alone further describes him as "the father of Alexander and Rufus."

2. This additional statement of St. Mark adds greatly to our interest. He speaks of the sons, Alexander and Rufus, as if they were well-known disciples of the Lord; and St. Paul, in his greetings to the Christians at Rome from Corinth, sends special words of love to Rufus and his mother, who had acted in a peculiarly tender and motherly manner to him: "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."

Some, too, have thought that Symeon, surnamed Niger, might be identified with the cross-bearer of Christ—for Symeon and Simon are the same name—and he is noticed with Lucius of Cyrene as one of the prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch. If this were true, he would assume the new name of Christian, which we know originated in that city. Well might Simon extol the strange arrangement of Providence which brought him to the place where he should meet Jesus, at the very time when they were leading Him out to be crucified. Well might he bless

the rough violence of the Roman soldiers, who compelled him to bear the cross for his weary and fainting Master. The bondage of man proved to him the liberty of Christ; the shame of earth turned into the glory of heaven. How grateful must he have felt afterwards that he had this unique honour; that it was given to him to alleviate in some small degree the unparalleled sufferings of his adorable Redeemer—to share with Him the ignominy and the degradation of the cross. When he was afterwards called by the name of Christ at Antioch, he could indeed clothe himself with the shame of the cross as with a royal robe, and say with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. Imagination helps us to fill in what tradition tells us about this victim of brutal power who was compelled to take part in the crucifixion of the Saviour. He may have been a proselyte who had come all the way from Africa to observe the Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. He had, perhaps, never previously heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and was not thinking of Him at the time when he saw Him on the way to execution. Probably, instead of pitying the sad case of the Sufferer beside him, he was occupied with the hardship of his own case, and filled with resentment on account of the odious service so ruthlessly exacted of him, including even Jesus in his indiscriminate wrath. But forced, in spite of himself, to accompany our Lord to Calvary, bearing the hated cross, he was made a witness of all the memorable incidents of the transcendent tragedy that took place there. He saw the Divine meekness and patience of the Sufferer; he heard the wonderful words of love and pardoning mercy that flowed from His lips; he beheld the supernatural darkness gathering round the cross, and felt the ground trembling under his feet; and, dismayed by these awful portents, he heard the loud cry with which Jesus gave up the ghost. And when the darkness cleared away, he saw the centurion transfixed with awe before the central cross, glorifying God, and exclaiming, "Truly this was the Son of God." All this could not but have deeply impressed the mind of Simon. He must have learned enough in the brief companionship of a few hours with the Prince of Sufferers—in such unexampled circumstances—to

change the current of his whole life. He must have been one of the first who were drawn to Christ when lifted up upon the cross in fulfilment of His own words. Coming to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, he found in the cross of Christ the true fulfilment of the great historical rite; he found in that dying life a perfect example, and in that death an atoning sacrifice. Simon of Cyrene, the cross-bearer of Christ, was the first-fruits of Africa to Christianity.

> From all thou holdest precious, for one hour
> Arise and come away,
> And let the calling Voice be heard in power;
> Desert thyself to-day;
> If with thy Lord for once thou turn aside,
> With Him thou'lt fain abide.[1]

ii. A Forced Disciple.

1. *The Chance Meeting.*—It was the time of the great Passover feast, and Simon, no doubt, had come all the way from his busy and beautiful town in North Africa to keep, like a pious Jew, the sacred festival in the holy city. At such seasons Jerusalem was always densely crowded, and many of the pilgrims who could not get lodgings in the city itself stayed in the huts and booths which were erected on the hills or in the valleys outside, or put up in some of the quiet villages like Bethany, which were within easy reach of the capital, and, above all, of the Temple. Simon had either not been in the city the night before, and so had not heard of the arrest and trial of the prophet from Nazareth, which had caused such excitement amongst those there, or else, if he did know of it, he cared so little about it that he was not in the slightest hurry to get back to Jerusalem and hear the news. He was walking quietly and leisurely towards the town, ignorant of, or utterly uninterested in, the tragic events which were happening there, knowing nothing of the Nazarene, and not troubling himself about His guilt or His innocence, when his attention was arrested by the approach of a strange procession. He had no doubt seen executions before, but there was something about *this* procession which roused his curiosity. The soldiers marching by the side

[1] J. E. A. Brown.

of the malefactors, who bore their crosses fastened to their shoulders, the rabble who followed after, were no strange sights to a man from a big and busy town like Cyrene; but Simon had never before seen scribes and priests and doctors of the law demeaning themselves to join the riff-raff, who were always ready for a day's enjoyment of this sort. He had never before heard criminals followed by such fierce shouts of "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" He had never before seen a long string of women bringing up the rear of such a dead march, and giving way to their grief in bitter weeping and loud lamentations.

Just as the crowd comes close to him there is a sudden pause. One of the prisoners falls beneath the weight of His cross, and Simon comes near to look at Him. The officer, seeing that it is useless to force the fallen King of the Jews to carry His load farther, casts his eye on the stranger, and struck, perhaps, by his stalwart appearance, and seeing doubtless that he was but a common man, orders the soldiers to seize him, and to bind the cross of the Nazarene on his shoulders.

And so Simon meets with Jesus. Was it chance? Do we say, "What a singular providence that this stranger should have arrived just at the nick of time to meet the procession, and to take so prominent and unpremeditated a part in it?" It was the same wonderful coincidence that the funeral procession at Nain should be passing through the gate at the very moment when Jesus and His disciples were entering in. How often do events, upon which the whole course of our natural and of our spiritual life turns, seem to hang upon trifles! The Providence of God arranges not only the great, but also the small, occurrences of human life and destiny.

¶ If Simon had started from the little village where he lived five minutes earlier or later, if he had walked a little faster or slower, if he had happened to be lodging on the other side of Jerusalem, or if the whim had taken him to go in at another gate, or if the centurion's eye had not chanced to alight on him in the crowd, or if the centurion's fancy had picked out somebody else to carry the cross, then all his life would have been different. And so it is always. You go down one turning rather than another, and your whole career is coloured thereby. You miss a train and you escape death. Our lives are like the Cornish

rocking stones, pivoted on little points. The most apparently insignificant things have a strange knack of suddenly developing unexpected consequences, and turning out to be, not small things at all, but great and decisive and fruitful.

¶ Let us look with ever fresh wonder on this marvellous contexture of human life, and on Him that moulds it all to His own perfect purposes. Let us bring the highest and largest principles to bear on the smallest events and circumstances, for we can never tell which of these is going to turn out a revolutionary and formative influence in our life. And if the highest Christian principle is not brought to bear upon the trifles, it will never be brought to bear upon the mighty things. The most part of every life is made up of trifles, and unless these are ruled by the highest motives, life, which is divided into grains like the sand, will have gone by, while we are preparing for the big events which we think worthy of being regulated by lofty principles. Look after the trifles, for the law of life is like that which is laid down by the Psalmist about the Kingdom of Jesus Christ: "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth," a little seed sown in an apparently ungenial place "on the top of the mountains." Yes! but what will come of it? "The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon." The great harvest of benediction or of curse, of joy or of sorrow, will come from the minute seeds that are sown in the *great* trifles of our daily life.[1]

2. *Compelled to bear the Cross.*—"They compel one Simon to go with them that he might bear his cross." The question at once presents itself, By what right, from what cause, did they seize on this stray traveller and force him into the degrading position of bearing this shameful cross? For let it be remembered that then it was *a shameful cross.* What is now our ornament and pride, the symbol of all that is worthiest in man and divinest in God, was then the badge of shame and lowest degradation. So that it was an outrage and an insult of the very last degree that was inflicted on Simon the Cyrenian when they compelled him to bear the cross of Jesus Christ. The vilest of that howling Jewish mob would have shrunk from touching it, it would have been pollution; while the lowest Roman soldier would have regarded "bearing a cross" as an unspeakable degradation. Then how came they, how dared they, inflict this insult on Simon the Cyrenian? Was it

[1] A. Maclaren.

the swarthy hue, the dusky complexion, the slave mark on skin or dress, which singled him out as one who might be safely wronged? This seems to be the most probable opinion, for Simon *was* a Cyrenian, that is, a native of North Africa, and though we may not, perhaps, say positively he was a "man of colour," yet there might be enough to mark him out *the slave*. Was it for that reason they dared to inflict on him this wanton insult, and compelled him to bear the cross of the doomed Nazarene?

¶ When Cyrus, the Persian king, conquered Palestine, he introduced into it several of the customs of his own country. One of the most remarkable of these was what might be called the postal service, which forwarded the messages of the government to all parts of the land. It was called the *Angareion*, from a Tartar word which means compulsory work without pay. Herodotus gives an interesting account of this custom; from which we learn that, in order to transmit messages with the utmost possible speed, relays of men and horses were kept ready at intervals along the principal roads, which handed on the despatches from one to another without pause or interruption, whatever might be the inclemency of the weather, and by night as well as by day. Such mounted couriers were further empowered to press into the service, should it be found necessary, additional men and horses, even if they had to leave their own work in the field for the purpose; and boats, if they had to cross a river or an arm of the sea. It can easily be imagined that such a system could be used by a government as an engine of oppression; and the people who were compelled to render this gratuitous service, often at very inconvenient times, and at great risk and loss to themselves, would doubtless feel very keenly the injustice of it. In Palestine it was greatly disliked, for, besides its own inherent evils, it had the additional one of being a foreign custom imposed upon a conquered people. The Tartar word for this disagreeable labour, having been introduced into the language of the Jews, came to be identified by them with every oppressive service. Our Lord used this peculiar word when He laid down the duty of self-denial and goodwill, even towards those who act oppressively towards us. "And whosoever shall compel thee"—as the mounted courier compels the farmers and labourers along the way to help him in forwarding the despatches of the government—"whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." And here in the text the word which is employed to denote the action of the Roman soldiers in compelling Simon

the Cyrenian to carry the cross of Christ for Him, is the same word as was borrowed from the old postal service of Persia. The Romans, who too readily made their own any instrument of oppression which they found among foreign nations, were familiar with the word, which crept into their own language, and with it the custom which it represented. No more appropriate word could have been used. It is a most picturesque, and at the same time gives a most touching pathos to the occasion. It links this single act of tyranny with the whole gigantic system. The world has been familiar with forced labour from the earliest days. As far back as we can go in the sorrowful history of our race, we find the stronger tribes making slaves and beasts of burden of the weaker, and of those whom they conquered in war. The brick-making of the Israelites, under the intolerable cruelty of which they groaned and died, was not by any means the first oppression in Egypt. Ages before that, we find proofs of the reckless disregard of human life shown by the Pharaohs, compelling thousands, without wages or even food, to construct for them those enormous monuments, the ruins of which excite the astonishment of every traveller. Nor can any modern race lift up a stone against those ancient oppressors; for there is no nation that has not been guilty of similar practices. Our own country cannot plead guiltless to the charge. It brought upon America and upon the West Indies the curse of slavery, which could be removed only by a tremendous sacrifice of blood and treasure. Within the memory of this generation men have been carried away from their homes and pursuits, and forced into the naval service of our country by the ruthless press-gang. As the cross of Christ represented the sins of the whole world laid upon the Redeemer, it may be said, therefore, that that cross, laid upon the unwilling shoulders of Simon the Cyrenian, represented all the oppressive burdens which man has laid upon his fellow-men. It was the *Angareion* of the world.[1]

3. We can imagine the feelings of shame and indignation and bitterness which must have filled Simon's heart. To have come all the way from Cyrene to worship in the Temple of his fathers, to refresh his faith by taking part in the great feast, to see the sights of which he might tell to his wife and children at home, to meet the friends whom he had not seen for years, and then to have come through such a bitter, degrading experience! How could he go into the city now without feeling that every one was looking at him and saying, "There's the poor wretch

[1] Hugh Macmillan.

who carried the cross of the Nazarene?" How could he go home with nothing to tell but this story of how he had been insulted and degraded and shamefully treated? Such a thing could hardly have happened to him even in Cyrene, where the Jews had full Roman rights; and yet in Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King which he had so passionately longed to see, he had been treated like a criminal and an outcast, and branded before a crowd of fellow-countrymen with the mark of shame—the curse of the cross. If, as he read in his Bible, he was cursed of God who hung upon a tree—was not he too cursed upon whose shoulders the tree hung? Had the soldiers branded him with a red-hot iron, as runaway slaves were treated, he could hardly have felt a deeper sense of degradation in man's sight, and in God's as well.

¶ And yet for Simon we have no pity, we have only congratulation, almost envy. He who shared for a few minutes Christ's cross and its dishonour, has now an honoured name in the Church and throughout the world. His dishonour has changed into an honour which many a saint might covet. For these myrmidons of the Roman government who knew not what they did, we have much compassion even to-day, for be they what they may, in whatsoever world, suppose them to be forgiven and redeemed in answer to the Saviour's prayer, yet they must pass for ever, as long as thought and memory last, as those who laid a sacrilegious hand upon the Saviour of the world, who spat in His face, and struck Him on the head, and bowed their knees to mock the Son of God![1]

4. Simon had to be *compelled* to take up this burden for Jesus. We might have wished this had not been necessary. We should have liked it to be at least one bright human touch in the otherwise dark picture of our Saviour's passion had Simon been so moved with pity, as he passed by, at the sight of Him struggling along under His heavy cross, that he had freely offered to bear it for Him. When we think of the Man of Sorrows on His dolorous way, of the brutal soldiery, with the ruthless mob hurrying Him to His awful death, and then of what He had been, and of all the good He had done—how He had borne the sins and sorrows of others, and lightened every man's burden but His own, it seems incredible that there

[1] R. F. Horton.

should have been no one to befriend Him in His day of sorest need, no one to spare Him a single indignity, no one to bear His cross for Him, even for a little, but this Simon who had to be compelled.

¶ Where was that other Simon? Had he not said, "I will go with thee both into prison and to death"? This man's name was Simon. What a silent and yet strong rebuke this must have been to him. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" *Another Simon took thy place at the last hour!* Where was the beloved disciple? Where were they all? Holy women were gathering round, but where were the men? Sometimes the Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward, and He finds others to take their place. If this has ever happened to us it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live. We learn this lesson from the Cyrenian. Keep your place, and let not *another Simon* occupy it. It is said of Judas, "his bishopric shall another take," but a true disciple will retain his own office.[1]

II.

Christ the Sin-bearer.

i. The Way of the Cross.

1. "Jesus went out, bearing the cross *for himself*" (John xix. 17). One special indignity connected with the punishment of crucifixion was that the condemned man had to carry on his back through the streets the cross upon which he was about to suffer. In pictures the cross of Jesus is generally represented as a lofty structure, such as a number of men would have been needed to carry; but the reality was something totally different. A soldier was able to reach up to the lips of Christ on the cross with a sponge on a reed. It was not much above the height of a man, and there was just enough wood to support the body. But the weight was considerable, and to carry it on the back which had been torn with scourging must have been excessively painful. Another source of intense pain was the crown of thorns, if, indeed, He still wore it. We are told that before the procession set out towards Golgotha the robes of mockery were taken off and His own garments put on; but it is not said

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

that the crown of thorns was removed. Most cruel of all, however, was the shame. There was a kind of savage irony in making the man carry the implement on which he was to suffer; and, in point of fact, throughout classical literature this mode of punishment is a constant theme of savage banter and derision.

2. There is evidence that the imagination of Jesus had occupied itself specially beforehand with this portion of His sufferings. Long before the end He had predicted the kind of death He should die; but even before these predictions had commenced He had described the sacrifices which would have to be made by those who became His disciples as cross-bearing—as if this were the last extreme of suffering and indignity. Did He so call it simply because His knowledge of the world informed Him of this as one of the greatest indignities of human life? Or was it the foreknowledge that He Himself was to be one day in this position that coloured His language? We can hardly doubt that the latter was the case. And now the hour on which His imagination had dwelt was come, and in weakness and helplessness He had to bear the cross in the sight of thousands who regarded Him with scorn.

¶ To a noble spirit there is no trial more severe than shame—to be the object of cruel mirth and insolent triumph. Jesus had the lofty and refined self-consciousness of one who never once had needed to cringe or stoop. He loved and honoured men too much not to wish to be loved and honoured by them; He had enjoyed days of unbounded popularity, but now His soul was filled with reproach to the uttermost; and He could have appropriated the words of the Psalm, "I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people." The reproach of Christ is all turned into glory now; and it is very difficult to realise how abject the reality was. Nothing perhaps brings this out so well as the fact that two robbers were sent away to be executed with Him. This has been regarded as a special insult offered to the Jews by Pilate, who wished to show how contemptuously he could treat One whom he affected to believe their king. But more likely it is an indication of how little more Christ was to the Roman officials than any one of the prisoners whom they put through their hands day by day.[1] And so Jesus, in company with the two robbers, issued from the gates of the palace and passed along the Via Dolorosa.

[1] J. Stalker.

¶ The traditional scene of Christ's death, over which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built, is inside the present walls, but it seems to have been ascertained that the present Church is beyond the second of the ancient walls. The whole question is still *sub judice*. It is quite uncertain outside which gate of the city the execution took place. The name Calvary, or Golgotha, possibly indicates that the spot was a skull-like knoll; but there is no reason to think that it was a hill of the size supposed by designating it Mount Calvary. Indeed, there is no hill near any gate corresponding to the image in the popular imagination. In modern Jerusalem there is a street pointed out as the veritable Via Dolorosa along which the procession passed; but this also is more than doubtful. Like ancient Rome, ancient Jerusalem is buried beneath the rubbish of centuries. From the scene of the trial to the supposed site of the execution is nearly a mile. And it is quite possible that Jesus may have had to travel as far or farther, while an ever-increasing multitude of spectators gathered round the advancing procession.[1]

ii. The Suffering Saviour.

When we speak of "the Cross" we do not mean only the cross which Christ bore to Calvary and on which He suffered; we mean the very sufferings of Christ Himself. But do we really think of what we mean when we speak of the sufferings of Christ, the Sin-bearer of the world? Christ, we know, voluntarily took His cross. He gave Himself for us. He laid down His life for us. Even when the weight of the cross was taken from Him for those few moments, while Simon bore it, He was most really bearing it. His soul was wounded; His spirit was crucified. He lays down the cross which may be seen, the instrument of torture, at the bidding of others, that He may the more truly bear the inward cross.

¶ Very reverently, and with few words, one would touch upon the physical weakness of the Master. Still, it does not do us any harm to try to realise how very marked was the collapse of His physical nature, and to remember that that collapse was not entirely owing to the pressure upon Him of the mere fact of physical death; and that it was still less a failure of His will, or like the abject cowardice of some criminals who have had to be dragged to the scaffold, and helped up its steps; but that the reason why His flesh failed was very largely because there was

[1] J. Stalker.

laid upon Him the mysterious burden of the world's sin. Christ's demeanour in the act of death, in such singular contrast to the calm heroism and strength of hundreds who have drawn all their heroism and strength from Him, suggests to us that, looking upon His sufferings, we look upon something the significance of which does not lie on the surface, and the extreme pressure of which is to be accounted for by that blessed and yet solemn truth of prophecy and Gospel alike—"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

iii. Christ's Cross and Ours.

1. We are wont to speak of trouble of any kind as a cross; and doubtless any kind of trouble may be borne bravely in the name of Christ. But, properly speaking, the cross of Christ is what is borne in the act of confessing Him or for the sake of His work. When any one makes a stand for principle because he is a Christian, and takes the consequences in the shape of scorn or loss, this is the cross of Christ. The pain you may feel in speaking to another in Christ's name, the sacrifice of comfort or time you may make in engaging in Christian work, the self-denial you exercise in giving of your means that the cause of Christ may spread at home or abroad, the reproach you may have to bear by identifying yourself with militant causes or with despised persons, because you believe they are on Christ's side—in such conduct lies the cross of Christ. It involves trouble, discomfort, and sacrifice. One may fret under it, as Simon did; one may sink under it, as Jesus did Himself; it is ugly, painful, shameful often; but no disciple is without it. Our Master said, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."

2. "There are three things," says Vaughan,[1] "which make a 'cross'—shame, and suffering, and self-mortification."

(1) *Shame.*—"Bearing the cross after Jesus" frequently entails misunderstanding, coldness, suspicion, disgrace. To do it is a real pain; and there must be such a victory over self that self is nowhere. No one knows,—but those who have to do it,—what a martyrdom that is to a sensitive mind. No physical pain is greater, and no act of heroism is more honourable. It needs the compulsion of a strong, irresistible motive;

[1] *Sermons*, xv. 149.

of a conscience quickened and kindled by the love of God. That is a "cross,"—ignominy borne for Christ's sake.

(2) *Suffering.*—It is the part of every Christian to "know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." To bear the pain of the Cross of Christ would be a great thing; but to rise above the pain to the joy that is in it, and to turn the suffering to happiness, and the shame to glory, and the death of the natural feeling into the very deliciousness of the higher life,—that is far greater! Such was Christ's obedience, and such His love! And this is the true and the grand view of every "cross."

(3) *Self-Mortification.*—The effort to keep all things in their place involves a mortified life. To stop short of indulgence, to drive away something that we are afraid is beginning to enslave us till we have taught it its proper place and admit it again later into our life as a useful servant; to stand amidst the vast multitude of God's creatures with which the earth teems—persons, places, things, sorrows, joys, pleasures, and pains—a free man, enslaved by none but using all fearlessly; neither held back by fear nor attracted by mere pleasure, but using and accepting or rejecting each as it comes, in so far as it leads the soul Godward—this is indeed liberty; but such liberty can be purchased only by mortification.

¶ A successful business man kept above his desk the motto, "Do the hard thing first," knowing, as every sincere person knows, that we are apt to shirk, procrastinate, and delay the most vital issues of life. Now, the Christian must do the "hard thing first." The way of life, the path leading to eternal day, is difficult, thorny, and rugged. The Christian way is the "way of the Cross," the righteous path is toilsome and weary, but we have the joy of knowing that

> All this toil shall make us
> Some day all His own,
> And the end of sorrow
> Shall be near His throne.[1]

3. But we must be very careful that our cross is not a self-imposed one. It must not be our cross, but Christ's cross. They compelled Simon to bear Christ's cross. It was no willing choice. Indeed, a self-chosen cross is very seldom the right

[1] J. H. Renshaw.

one for us to carry. And it is just here we touch the true reason of so much religious failure. We *make* our own crosses instead of simply carrying Christ's; we strive to do religious work instead of doing our own work religiously. Yet is it not clear that if Simon had cut down all the trees in Gethsemane and all the cedars of Lebanon, he would but have made for himself a heavier burden, and would have been no true helper of Jesus Christ?

¶ We may remember that sometimes the cross, which we are not compelled to bear, may be put down. Asceticism, pure and simple, is a sin. It is the shadow of suicide. There is no merit in bearing a cross, so far as the mere bearing is concerned. There is no merit in the cross itself. Many speak as if there were some moral worth in being distressed and hampered in the world. There is none. Bodily health is not merely a boon to be striven for, it is in some sense a virtue. Few of us are so well as we ought to be. The laws and precautions for the preservation of health are often very simple and plain, but the observance of them is tedious and troublesome. We might choose that little cross, if you like to call it so, of care and simplicity and regularity in living from love to our Father, that we may have longer time to live and do His work on earth. There are those who bear the cross of ill-health who were not really compelled to do it; the matter was in their own hands. There is not a burden or a trouble in this world, viewed simply in itself, and apart from its associations and what it leads to, which we are not justified in laying down if we can; or, rather, which it is not a positive duty to lay down if we can.[1]

¶ We shall find our cross; none of us, it is certain, will be excused. Christ had to bear His cross; so must we. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." But mark, that cross which we make our own is, in reality, Christ's cross, the one He gives us. "Take *my* yoke upon you." Simon did not choose his own. We have no right to manufacture and carry crosses of our own selection. Simon was turned back, converted. He was travelling his own self-chosen road once; after he met Jesus he must needs tread in the Saviour's steps. It is all symbolical. We cannot serve Christ, bear His cross, without conversion. We need to be changed, to take up His cross instead of our own. There is more in this than we think. What makes so many formal, unreal, unhappy Christians, but the failure to appreciate this

[1] T. Gasquoine.

truth? For instance, what good will the Lenten season do to any person if it be to him merely a season of selfish self-denial, of selfish cross-bearing? Suppose a man leaves off smoking, or taking alcoholic drink, or novel-reading, or suppose he makes a practice of not going to any place of amusement, or of getting up an hour earlier during Lent, that is a cross-bearing, no doubt, for him, in a sense—a useful discipline in certain cases. Indeed, it is to be wished that more might follow it; only remember, it must touch the spiritual life—it must help, not hinder, it. It must not be pharisaical, pretentious; for if it be, Christ has not ordered it. He does not like it in the least. So, too, with sin. How frequently we read amiss our soul's state, and fondly imagine there is nothing much the matter with us; that our faith, our works, are quite sound, when in reality there is some secret besetting root of evil eating the very life out of us, and drying up completely the springs of earnestness and love. What is needed is Divine advice and succour, a discipline and treatment not our own, but Christ's. This is the central truth of Jesus' dealing with Simon. The cross we try to lift must be pointed out, given to us, along with the strength to bear it, by our Lord Himself, not selected, shaped by ourselves. It will be, then,

A hidden cross for daily wear
Along a common road.

Let that be the spirit of our life, and the Christ-Cross we carry shall verily "purify our conscience from dead works, and cleanse us from all sin."[1]

The bonds that press and fetter,
That chafe the soul and fret her,
What man can know them better,
O brother men, than I?

And yet, my burden bearing,
The five wounds ever wearing,—
I too in my despairing
Have seen Him as I say;—
Gross darkness all around Him
Enwrapt Him and enwound Him,—
O late at night I found Him
And lost Him in the day!

Yet bolder grown and braver
At sight of one to save her,
My soul no more shall waver,
With wings no longer furled,—

[1] G. T. Shettle.

But cut with one decision
From doubt and men's derision,
That sweet and vanished vision
Shall follow through the world.[1]

III.

Simon and Christ.

i. Bearing the Cross with Jesus.

1. St Luke tells us that they "laid on Simon the cross to bear it *after Jesus.*" It seems from St Luke's account that they did not entirely remove the cross from the shoulders of our Lord, but so arranged its parts that Simon might "bear it after Jesus." And it is extremely possible that they placed the head of the cross on Christ's shoulder, while the foot rested on that of Simon, so that when the eye of the man travelled along the cross it rested on the form of the suffering Son of God. The burden was thus borne between the two, but the heaviest end still rested on the shoulders of Christ. And that is the only bearable way for any man to bear the burden of the cross.[2]

¶ De Costa[3] offers an interesting explanation of Simon's service. He says that the cross, being ordinarily fastened to the shoulders of the condemned, was not likely to have been unloosed by the soldiers on the way. He is of opinion that Simon was only compelled by them to lift up the cross, which was proving too much for Jesus' physical strength, and to walk behind or beside Him bearing it up.

2. The picture forcefully suggests the *vicarious atonement of Christ.* For when we look more closely, what is the real fact that takes shape? We see a sinful man—one of ourselves—bearing the cross to Calvary, yet, when arrived there, once more yielding it up to Christ. So far, but only so far, he can bear that crushing load; but when the place of death is reached, where man's sin and God's judgment meet and merge together, the human instrument becomes inadequate; he must resign it

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *A Vision.* [2] G. Critchley.
[3] *Four Witnesses,* 415.

to Another, and step back into the posture of a spectator only. In this detail, as in so many minute points in the Passion-narrative, a suggestion is given of larger truths than appear at first. It seems to tell us, as if by parable, that the cross did not belong to Jesus by right; for in truth it did not belong to Him at all, it became His by choice. The cross was ours; a burden of pain, a righteous badge of shame and guilt allotted as our fit portion; a penalty that in our clearest hours we know was due for each of us: in a word, it was the cross of man. And in Simon we see none other than man's symbolic representative, by his presence and his service unconsciously declaring that there Jesus took on Himself a chastisement not His own. In that hour we were healed by His stripes. We are typified in the Cyrenian. In visible act he did what we must do in thought and feeling, if the infinite virtue of that death is to avail for us. We too must take up the cross, and in person deliver it up to Jesus Christ, in the sense that by trust and penitent sympathetic imagination we realise that it belongs to, and befits, every sinner, that it stands for the punishment we deserve, and that we should have been abandoned to endure it, had not that great love intervened. Thank God that Jesus took the cross from Simon on Calvary![1]

3. Then another and equally real sense holds good in which we are summoned to perpetuate Simon's act. Not merely is the cross the gateway of the Christian life; it is its signature and distinctive mark ever after. Vicarious atonement by no means implies that we never have anything to bear. Many people think it does, thereby bringing great discredit on the Gospel; but it is a mistake born of simple ignorance, for no one can help noticing, and feeling the significance of, the fact that in the New Testament practically all the allusions to Jesus as our Pattern are given in direct connection with His Passion. *Because* He suffered, therefore we suffer with Him. So, again, St. Paul speaks of fellowship in the Lord's sufferings as that after which he more and more aspired; and in this mixed world there will be no need to manufacture occasions of endurance; they will meet us in plenty, provided only we do not shrink

[1] H. R. Mackintosh.

from them. In each life meriting the Christian name there will be found self-denial, sacrifice, loss, humiliation, that would have been impatiently, or even indignantly, thrust aside, had Christ not chosen them, but which are made welcome, even if it be falteringly, for His sake. Do we understand what these things mean? Have we learnt that they are no accident in the devout life, but its essence? Is it even now dawning on us that there is a price to pay for fellowship with Christ? Well, if we are wakening to these vast, but sometimes forgotten, truths, and if at times the price seems very costly, let us not fail to recollect what it means for Christ that we should pay it. Simon of Cyrene bore the cross, and thus spared the Lord some pain; let us bear ours as He appoints it, in the world, and in the redeeming toil of His Kingdom; and that too will spare Him pain—the pain of seeing others lost whom we might have helped to save, and the pain of beholding our so fruitless and barren lives. Nay, rather, it will fill the cup of joy that was set before Him when He Himself endured the bitter cross, "despising the shame."

I think of the Cyrenian
Who crossed the city-gate
When forth the stream was pouring
That bore Thy cruel fate.

I ponder what within him
The thoughts that woke that day,
As his unchosen burden
He bore that unsought way.

. . . . .

Yet, tempted he as we are;
O Lord, was Thy cross mine?
Am I, like Simon, bearing
A burden that is Thine?

Thou must have looked on Simon;
Turn, Lord, and look on me,
Till I shall see and follow
And bear Thy cross for Thee.[1]

[1] H. R. Mackintosh.

ii. The Symbol of Shame turned into Glory.

Behold one of life's divinest transfigurations. When they placed the end of the cross upon the shoulders of the slave, they meant to put fresh dishonour on the Christ. But the cross has grown to be the supreme uplifting power of all those of whom that slave was the representative and type. Not only has it rescued the name of Simon the Cyrenian from oblivion, but it has done far more, for it has broken the fetters of the slave well-nigh throughout the world. When these men made the slave the helper of the Saviour, they unconsciously pro claimed "liberty to the captive."

The Christian freedom which Simon found in his degrading bondage, may be regarded as the earnest and the guarantee that similar Christian freedom will be enjoyed by all in the dark lands who have been compelled by their fellow-creatures to carry the cross of toil and shame. The transportation of the slave to other countries, in a manner as providential as the coming of Simon to Jerusalem, has often been the means of bringing him within the reach of Christian influences, so that his bondage has proved to him life from the dead. In bearing his compulsory cross, he has heard of the Crucified One, and now knows Jesus of Nazareth as his own Redeemer, and the truth has made him free indeed. And so it will go on—until there shall be no compulsory labour under the sun, and every oppressed one shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Christianity has put its own higher meanings and purposes into the common language of men. The wild weeds brought into its garden, under the culture of grace, display a beauty and fruitfulness before unknown. The use of the *Angareion*, or compulsory service, of the Persians is ennobled in the service of the Christian religion. Like the other Persian word "paradise," which signified originally a park or pleasure-garden, in which wild beasts were kept and beautiful foreign trees grew, but which our Lord employed to describe the blessed heavenly world into which the dying thief should be immediately translated—"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,"—so the original Persian word for "compel" is transformed by being used in connection with the cross-bearing of Christ. In this

Divine usage it becomes the vehicle of far higher truth than any which it knew at first, and is divested of all its former disagreeable associations. Blessed are those who are compelled to bear the cross of Christ, for in so doing they are bearing the instrument of their own redemption; and the following of Christ that is at first enforced, that is done in pain and shame and toil, ends in walking with Him at liberty, running with enlargement of heart in the way of His commandments.

¶ Do you see that young Jewish Rabbi flashing along the Damascus Road, hating the very name of Christ, and loathing the story of His cross? His life is all laid out, his position is secure, his renown is safe among the generations of Israel. But there comes one blinding flash, one awful, crushing revelation, that sweeps away the purpose and the dream of Saul for ever, and Paul stands upon his feet, the bondsman of Jesus Christ, chained for ever to the cross he once despised. Henceforth he lives a life "constrained," "compelled," but it is glorious living, and the mighty influence of that man, *compelled* to bear the cross of Christ, will last longer than the world.[1]

Who speaketh now of peace?
Who seeketh for release?
The Cross is strength, the solemn Cross is gain.
The Cross is Jesus' breast,
Here giveth He the rest
That to His best belov'd doth still remain.

How sweet an ended strife!
How sweet a dawning life!
Here will I lie as one who draws his breath
With ease, and hearken what my Saviour saith
Concerning me; the solemn Cross is gain;
Who willeth now to choose?
Who strives to bind or loose?
Sweet life, sweet death, sweet triumph and sweet pain.[2]

[1] G. Critchley. [2] Dora Greenwell.

Christ's Commission to His Church.

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CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS CHURCH.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.—xvi. 15.

THESE are the *last words* recorded of all Christ's communications to His apostles. Let us think what would be the effect on those who heard it of such a parting charge. It made all the difference to the apostles, whether they should simply be holders and possessors of truth and blessings, teachers and ministers in their own place and among their own people of the grace in which they believed, or whether they should be missionaries of it—messengers running to and fro, and never pausing, never resting in their ceaseless and unwearied wanderings, to carry the news onward and onward, farther and farther on, to ever new hearers and more and more unknown lands. So St. Paul understood it: "From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum"—the type of all that was barbarous and uncouth—"I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Those parting words of Christ put the stamp on Christianity that it was to be *a universal religion*; a religion, not merely universal in the sense that it should be freely open to all who came to seek for it, but universal in the sense that it should go out and seek for men in their own homes; a religion of conquest and progress in all directions; a religion which should be satisfied with nothing short of having won over "the whole creation," the tribes of men of every language and colour, from north to south, on whom the sun rises and on whom it sets, to the obedience of Christ, and to the Kingdom of His Father.

The subject therefore is a missionary topic in its widest sense. We may study it under three main headings:—

I. The Responsibility of the Church.
II. The Preparation of the Missionary.
III. The Scope of the Commission.

I.

The Responsibility of the Church.

This is Christ's last great Easter command.

1. The first thought which suggests itself is *the practical duty.* "Go ye and preach." The matter was literally left in the apostles' hands, it is literally left in ours. Jesus has returned to the throne; ere departing He announced the distinct command. There it is, and it is age-long in its application,—"Preach," tell of the name and the work of "God manifest in the flesh." First "evangelise," then "disciple the nations." Bring *to* Christ, then build up *in* Christ. There are no other orders; we must think imperially of Christ and the Church, and our anticipations of success must be world-wide in their sweep.

¶ It used to be the fashion to laugh at Missions. You know how they are represented and talked about in the pages of Dickens and Thackeray. That time has passed away. It is no longer possible to laugh at them. The serious statesman feels that, if not the missionary, then he knows not who is to create the bond of spiritual fellowship between East and West, Africa and Europe. And he looks eagerly towards this missionary effort. People can no longer laugh. It is the biggest thing in the world that has to be done, and a great and consuming desire has seized the souls of people of all sorts and kinds. The mingling of the nations gives us our great opportunity, our great responsibility. It becomes a watchword—the evangelisation of the world in this generation. These are great desires, ideal desires. Remote, you say. You know not how they are to be realised. What is the use of bothering ourselves with things that seem so far off and unpractical? That feeling is the contrary of the Bible. The Bible always busies itself with things that are unpractical. The mark of a Saint is that he busies himself with things that are remote and unattainable.[1]

¶ The Duke of Wellington was once asked, "Is it any use to preach the Gospel to the Hindu?" The Duke said, "What are your marching orders?" "Oh!" was the reply, "our marching orders undoubtedly are to 'preach the gospel to every creature.'" "Very well," was the withering answer, "You must obey the command. You have nothing to do with results."[2]

[1] Bishop Gore.

[2] T. Lloyd Williams.

2. *The command is accompanied with a reproof.*—He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen (ver. 14). Remembering that there are still millions of the human race who have never heard the Gospel, despite the fact that nineteen centuries have rolled away since the command was first given—if the Lord Jesus Christ appeared among us some happy Easter Day, should we wonder if He would upbraid *us* for our unbelief and the hardness of our hearts?

3. *The command is addressed to all classes*—to women as well as to men. It is given first in another form to Mary Magdalene: "Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God" (St. John xx. 17). It is repeated to the other women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus, as they were wending their way back sadly to their homes. We feel at once there is a difference between them and the Magdalene; she affords us the highest example of sorrow and love, and she is therefore first to seek Him; when she sees the angels she shows no fear, so absorbed is she in the one thought about her Lord whom she had lost. But not so the other women. True, their love was deep, their sorrow was keen; but they came more calmly, debating, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Jesus Christ would send forth as His messengers, not only those who are filled with impulsive love to Him, but the calm, the calculating, and the prudent. You who see the stone and know the difficulties in the way, you who feel the awe and sacredness of the holy message; there is need for you to go and tell; there are some who will believe your story, while they will account a Magdalene with her ecstatic love as but an enthusiastic fanatic.

II.

The Preparation of the Missionary.

In the context of the following verse, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned," we find the fundamental principles on which the equipment of the missionary for his work is based. "Be-

lieve and be baptized," is the watchword of New Testament teaching. What do these words mean to us?—*Belief* and *Baptism*.

1. *Baptism*.—Take the second first. The Catechism bids the catechist ask his pupil what it means. And the pupil is to reply: "I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof." Here the thoughts specially enforced are that the Sacrament, the Baptismal rite, the Eucharistic rite, is outward and visible, a thing which touches and affects the common senses, and can serve therefore as a "sign" recognisable by them; and then that it stands related to something "inward and spiritual," belonging to the region of the "inner man" and to the unseen and eternal life, which something is the grace of God, His free saving action and virtue for us and in us.

Further, this "sign" is what it is by virtue of the direct institution of our Lord, by whom it was "given," "ordained" as nothing else of the outward and visible order was expressly sanctioned by Him.

Lastly, His sacred purpose in such gift and command is intimated. The "sign" is a means for the reception of the "grace," a channel by which our being finds contact with the spiritual action and virtue of God for our salvation. It is also "a pledge to assure us thereof," a token tangible and visible whereby we are to grasp with new certainty the fact of our possession, to be filled, as we contemplate the sign, with the animating conviction that this wonderful gift, the grace of God, is, for our future as well as for our present, "a sober certainty of waking bliss."[1]

2. *Belief*.—What is belief in the Christian sense of the term? Is it not a reliance upon the intuitions rather than upon the reason? "With the heart man believes unto righteousness." Look at the whole method of Christ's teaching and you will see at once what this definition means. Has it ever struck you that the silences and the omissions in the teaching of Christ are remarkable? He does not attempt to prove the existence

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Faith: Its Nature and Its Work*, 190.

of God; He takes it for granted. He does not offer a single argument for the existence of the soul, or the prolongation of human destiny beyond the earth, or the certainty of an unseen spiritual world. He shows us a publican at prayer—that is His way of proving the existence of a soul. He shows us Dives and Lazarus—that is His way of making us aware of the immortal destinies of man, and of his relation to an unseen world. Why is Christ silent upon the arguments which make for these great convictions? Because He knows that no argument can give them cogency. They lie outside the reason. They are witnessed to by the intuitions of mankind. It is to these intuitions that Christ appeals, and His appeal was justified by the astonishing fact that while men eagerly disputed His teaching upon conduct, the worst man never disputed His fundamental assumptions of the existence of God, of the soul, and of an unseen place of judgment behind the veils of time. Christ, in His own perfection and purity of life, suggests God; the publican at prayer vindicates the soul, for mankind from the beginning of the ages has been a creature conscious of a need for prayer; the inequalities of life displayed in Dives and Lazarus suggest a spiritual universe where wrong is righted, and final justice done to mankind.

You will perhaps say that this is to beg the entire case; and so it would be, if man were no more than a rational creature. But man is an irrational as well as a rational creature, and all that is noblest in him springs from a kind of redeeming irrationality. Love, heroism, martyrdom, are all acts of sublime irrationality. Put to the test, we refuse to be governed wholly by our reason, and we refuse every day. A man who never thought or acted, save upon the full consent of his reason, would be a sorry creature, and his life would be a dismal spectacle. There is a logic of the heart which is stronger than the logic of the reason.

¶ Harriet Martineau speaks of the real joy she found in deliverance from what she called the "decaying mythology" of the Christian religion. She took positive pleasure in the thought of its approaching annihilation. She, and those who thought with her, announced as a sort of gospel to mankind struggling in the wilderness, that the promised land was a mirage, and they expected mankind to welcome the intelligence. That was the spirit of the

old materialism; the later materialism is full of incurable despair and sadness. It is no longer sure that it is right. It is no longer able to disguise the truth that there are a hundred things in heaven and earth which were not dreamed of in its philosophy. It has fired its last shot, it has announced the promised land a mirage; and yet mankind follows the pillar of cloud and fire. In the heart of the materialist of to-day there is a new yearning toward faith, an ardent wish to believe more than his reason will permit him to believe.[1]

¶ No logic or reason would justify George Eliot, who had repudiated Christianity as vigorously as had Harriet Martineau, in reading Thomas à Kempis all her life, and having the immortal meditations of the old monk at her bedside as she died; but the logic of the heart justified her, and we love her for submitting to it. What had she, a woman who thrust aside all the theologies as incredible, to do with a Dinah Morris preaching Christ crucified, upon a village green? Yet she does paint Dinah Morris, and through the lips of the Methodist evangelist she lets her own soul utter a message which her intellect rejected.[2]

3. There must be a *readiness to obey* on the part of the missionary. "Begin at home" is an axiom of Christianity, but as an excuse for not taking part in missionary work it is futile. Begin at home means begin at your own character, for what you are will determine what you do; but beginning is not the whole. If you are resolved, in this supreme work of character-building, in this supreme work of self-conquest, to cultivate or concentrate every phase of your energy upon yourself until your individual victory is complete, then it will mean only the utterest woe of self-defeat. If we say we will not stretch out a hand to help others until there is nothing in us to prevent the question, "What lack I yet?" it will be simply that we lack the one thing without which is the lack of all.

¶ When the proposal to evangelise the heathen was brought before the Assembly of the Scotch Church in 1796, it was met by a resolution, that "to spread abroad the knowledge of the gospel amongst barbarous and heathen nations seems to be highly preposterous, in so far as philosophy and learning must in the nature of things take the precedence, and that while there remains at home a single individual every year without the means of religious knowledge, to propagate it abroad would be improper and absurd." And then Dr. Erskine called to the Moderator,

[1] W. J Dawson. [2] *Ibid.*

"Rax me that Bible," and he read the words of the great commission, which burst upon them like a clap of thunder.[1]

4. *A Desire to spread the Light.*—When the Christian faith, having begun its life, almost immediately began to spread itself abroad, it was doing two things. It was justifying its Lord's prophecy, and it was realising its own nature. At the very beginning there came a moment's pause and hesitation. We can see in those chapters of the Book of Acts how for a few years the faith could not quite believe the story of itself which was speaking at its heart. It heard the ends of the earth calling it, but it could not see beyond the narrow coasts of Judæa. But the beauty of those early days is the way in which it could not be content with that. It is not the ends of the earth calling in desperation for something which was not made to help them, which had no vast vocation, which at last started out desperately to do a work which must be done, but for which it felt no fitness in itself. The heart of the Church feels the need of going as much as the ends of the world desire that it should come. It is "deep answering to deep."[2]

Do we claim with a passion of desire to see the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? When John the Baptist came, he came to create an Israel of expectation. It was of that Israel of expectation that our Lord said, "From the days of John the Baptist till now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." By the cryings of their desire they have forced the hand of God and brought the Kingdom of God near. So it is. God will not save us without our own correspondence. If He delays long, if we do not see so much as a glimpse of one of the days of the Son of Man, it is because we desire it so little, because we find so much acquiescence in things as they are, so much miserable contentment, so little eagerness of desire. "God gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul." If you want little, or, rather, if your wants are small and selfish, if the things you really care about are the things that touch yourself, your own personal religion, to get a church you like and comfortable things,—things that touch your own family, your own interests, your own circle,—if your desires are narrow,

[1] R. F. Horton. [2] Phillips Brooks.

and selfish and small, then, lo! God will give you your desire, and send leanness withal into your soul. You have none of the eagerness and generosity of desire which belong to the really blessed. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."[1]

¶ The old historian, Diodorus, tells of a fire in the Pyrenees which burned off the forests and penetrated the soil until a stream of pure silver gushed forth and ran down the mountain-side. This is manifest fable. But there will be a more marvellous story to tell when the fire of God's Spirit begins to burn in the hearts of His people.[2]

¶ A missionary explained how he came to enter the missionary field: "In coming home one night, driving across the west prairie, I saw my little boy hurrying to meet me; the grass was high on the prairie, and suddenly he dropped out of sight. I thought he was playing, and was simply hiding from me; but he did not appear as I expected he would. Then the thought flashed upon my mind, 'There's an old well there, and he has fallen in.' I hurried up to him, reached down into the well and lifted him out; and as he looked up in my face, what do you think he said? 'O, papa, why didn't you hurry?' Those words never left me, they kept ringing in my ears until God put a new and deeper meaning into them, and bade me think of others who are lost, of souls without God and without hope in this world; and the message came to me as a message from the heavenly Father: 'Go, and work in my name'; and then from that vast throng, a pitiful, despairing cry rolled into my soul as I accepted God's call: 'O, why don't you hurry?'"[3]

Time greatly short,
O time so briefly long,
Yea, time sole battleground of right and wrong:
Art thou a time for sport
And for a song?[4]

5. *A Work of Patience.*—"To preach the gospel to the whole creation." This is a work of patience. We need the patience which dominated the spirit of St. Paul so that he could write: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24).

[1] Bishop Gore.
[2] D. J. Burrell.
[3] A. P. Hodgson.
[4] Christina G. Rossetti.

And we can find a still greater example of patience—the patience of Jesus, portrayed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 8–10).

¶ When they kindle the festival lamps round the dome of St. Peter's at Rome, there is first a twinkling spot here and there, and gradually they multiply till they outline the whole in an unbroken ring of light. So "one by one" men will enter the Kingdom, till at last "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."[1]

So mine are these new fruitings rich,
The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things;

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer passes; lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.[2]

III.

The Scope of the Commission.

Its scope will depend upon the meaning we put into the word "gospel." "Go ye and preach the gospel."

i. The Gospel.

1. What is this "Gospel" of "Good News" which we are to preach to the whole creation? We may find the answer in

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] George Meredith.

the word "Atonement." The Atonement of Christ culminated in His Resurrection and Ascension. The whole teaching of St. Paul turned round "Christ crucified, and the power of his resurrection." "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 10). It is this "power" that is able to transform men's lives—this is the Gospel which the Church is still called upon to preach to the heathen.

2. Perhaps our age unduly magnifies—and yet is it possible to magnify?—the love of God manifested in the great propitiation of Christ's death. We must hold both, God's righteousness—for what is God without righteousness?—and His love—for what is God without love for a world of sinners? There is the propitiation which sets forth hope. We cannot reconcile them, we often say; we cannot see how the same act of the Saviour can exhibit both sides of the Divine character. Perhaps we cannot. St. Paul and St. John could; they could see no inconsistency. There is no opposition; they are two sides of the same shield; we can do without neither, we need both equally, for God must be to us the supreme name for righteousness, just as He must be the supreme name for the love without which there would have been no redemption, no atonement for a lost world. We know it is sometimes said that the Eastern branch of the Church dwelt rather upon the Incarnation, and the Western upon the Redemption. But that may be pushed too far. The fact is, and we rejoice to think that it is a fact, that the whole Church, in every age, has been substantially one in the way in which it has held the central doctrine of the faith. On that doctrine there is no division; there is perfect unity in the Church.

¶ We have an example in the hymns of the universal Church. What do they say?

Now I have found the ground wherein
  Sure my soul's anchor may remain;
The wounds of Jesus for my sin,
  Before the world's foundation slain.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

And perhaps all the doctrine of the Cross was never more simply or more perfectly stated than in Mrs. Alexander's children's hymn:

There is a green hill far away.[1]

3. But is there not a reactionary tendency in our immediate times,—not so much to magnify the love of God in the Atonement, as to drift away from a simple trust in the saving value of Christ's sacrifice? Are we not now, if we may so speak, impatient of the word Atonement? It shocks our sense of justice; we want to set our lives on a moral basis for ourselves. This may be very well as a theory, the desire which prompts it may be worthy, but will it work in practice? Which of us does not say in his heart, "Oh, if I had not sinned before, I could now go on all right." No, sin needs its remedy, as much now as it did in Christ's day. And we can find that remedy, now as then, only at the Cross. All sacrifice is beautiful if offered in a right spirit, and Christ will not despise our poor offerings; but our greatest sacrifices can express their fullest meaning to the heart of the Eternal Father only when they are offered up in union with the Great Sacrifice of His Son.

Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him:
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.

ii. The Words of the Commission.

The universality of the commission is found in the meaning of the Gospel. But we have also the express words of Christ: "Go ye *into all the world*, and preach the gospel *to the whole creation*." These words unfold the whole plan of the Universality of the Kingdom—what Maclaren calls "the Divine audacity of Christianity." Take the scene. A mere handful of men, how they must have recoiled when they heard the sweeping command,

[1] J. S. Banks.

"Go ye into all the world"! It is like the apparent absurdity of Christ's quiet word: "They need not depart; give ye them to eat," when the only visible stock of food was "five loaves and two small fishes." As on that occasion, so in this final command, they had to take Christ's presence into account. "I am with you alway." So note the obviously world-wide extent of Christ's dominion. He had come into the world, to begin with, that "the world through him might be saved." "If any man thirst, let him come." The parables of the Kingdom of heaven are planned on the same grand scale—"I will draw all men unto me." It cannot be disputed that Jesus lived in this vision of universal dominion. Here emerges the great contrast of Christianity with Judaism. Judaism was intolerant, as all merely monotheistic faiths must be—and sure of future universality, but it was not a proselytising—not a missionary faith. Nor is it so to-day. It is exclusive and unprogressive still. Muhammadanism in its fiery youth, because monotheistic, was aggressive, but it enforced outward profession only, and left the inner life untouched. So it did not scruple to persecute as well as to proselytise. Christianity is alone in calmly setting forth a universal dominion, and in seeking it by the Word alone. "Put up thy sword into its sheath."

¶ The missionary battle-cry of the Moravian Brotherhood is "To win for the Lamb that was slain the reward of His suffering." They are a humble people, smallest of all in figures, but a mighty host in the world's redemption. They have one missionary for every fifty-eight members at home. They are careful in the observance of memorial days. One of these is the Day of Prayer. On August 26, 1727, they set their great vigil going. Twenty-four brethren and twenty-four sisters decided that they would keep up a continuous circle of prayer through the twenty-four hours of the day, each brother, each sister, in their own apartments accepting by lot the hour when they would pray.[1] They have put their sword in its sheath, and their weapon is prayer.

1. The word "Universality" gives rise to two thoughts.

(1) It finds in the Gospel *a Father for everybody*. In all the world it finds not a single orphan. The sorrowing are

[1] A. P. Hodgson.

everywhere; the thoughtless, depraved, debauched, ignorant, wretched, the sinful are everywhere. But nowhere an orphan. Whether in the jungles of Africa, the plains of Syria, the crowded cities of China, or amid the civilisations of Europe and America, the great Infinite Father Spirit broods over the spirits of men. Men may forget the Father, but He does not forget them. Into whatever desert, across whatever valley of sin, whatever slough of despond, whatever depths of despair, He follows them, wraps them about as with a garment, and whispers into their timid ears the sweet assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

¶ There came to my office one day an old lady with white hair, starved features, and tottering steps, leaning upon a cane. There was a scared, timid look on her careworn face as she sank heavily into a chair and told me her pathetic story. It was very simple. An utterly debauched and worthless son, who for thirty years had brought nothing but sorrow to the heart of his mother, had been arrested for an assault from which his victim had died. He was lying in jail awaiting trial. The bruised heart of the aged mother yearned for her boy, for he was still a boy to her. In a moment of indignation at what seemed to me outraged affection, I asked, "Why do you not leave him alone? He does not care for you." Her eyes filled afresh with tears, her head sank lower, as she answered with infinite tenderness, "No, I know he does not care for me, but I care for him, and he cannot have a mother long."[1]

(2) Universality means *a cure for every form of sin, and for all the sin of the world.* It does not believe in a defeated God. It is a victorious Gospel. One cannot help feeling sorry for the God whom some people believe in. He is a kind-hearted, benevolent God, who means well, but His world is too big. It has slipped away from His control and it is going to ruin at breakneck speed.

Christ, when He died,
Deceived the cross,
And on death's side
Threw all the loss:
The captive world awaked and found
The prisoners loose, the jailor bound.

[1] G. L. Perin in *Good Tidings*, 139.

O dear and sweet dispute
'Twixt death's and love's far different fruit,
Different as far
As antidotes and poisons are:
By the first fatal tree
Both life and liberty
Were sold and slain;
By this they both look up and live again.

O strange mysterious strife,
Of open death and hidden life!
When on the cross my King did bleed,
Life seemed to die, death died indeed.[1]

2. "Preach the gospel *to the whole creation.*" The commission according to St. Mark is all too superficially read by Christian people. "Go ye into all the world," does not merely mean, Travel over the surface of the earth and speak to men; the term "world" (*kosmos*) includes man and everything beneath him. The preaching of the Gospel to individual men is the beginning of the work, but the Gospel is to be proclaimed to the whole creation. We can reach the *kosmos* and the whole creation with the evangel only through men. In the proportion in which men hear the evangel, and, yielding to it, are remade by the healing ministry of the Servant of God, they become instruments through which He is able to reconstruct the order of the whole creation.

¶ Chaos created the agony of the Cross. Wherever Christ came into the midst of disorder, He suffered. He, before whose vision there flamed perpetually the glory of the Divine ideal, felt the anguish of God in the presence of the degradation of that ideal. All wounds and weariness, all sin and sorrow, not only of man, but through man in creation, surged upon His heart in waves of anguish. He called His disciples into fellowship with Himself in this suffering. The suffering of the flowers can never be cured if we do not touch them. The agony of the birds can never be ended save as we care for them. The earth can never be lifted from its dulness and deadness, and made to blossom into glorious harvest, save as it is touched by the life of renewed humanity. That is the story of the sufferings of Christ. He came into the world, Himself of the eternal Order, full of grace and truth, and in the consciousness of chaos and disorder He suffered.[2]

[1] Richard Crashaw. [2] G. Campbell Morgan.

¶ The garden of a truly Christian man ought to be the most beautiful in the whole district. When it is not so, it is because he is not living in the full power of the risen Christ. I sometimes think that if I am to judge the Christianity of London by looking at its gardens, it is an extremely poor thing. Let us keep hold of the philosophy of the simple illustration. That conception of Christian responsibility which aims at the saving of individual men, while it is utterly careless of the groaning of creation, is entirely out of harmony with the meaning of this commission. The home of the Christian man ought to be a microcosm of the Millennial Kingdom; and all the things of God's dear world—and how He loves it, flowers, and birds, and forces—ought to feel the touch of redeemed humanity, and be lifted into fuller life thereby.[1]

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore, in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,—

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.[2]

3. Man in the economy of God is king of the world, but he has lost his sceptre, has lost the key of the mysteries of the world in which he lives, and cannot govern it as he ought to govern, is unable to realise the creation that lies beneath

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

[2] Shelley, "The Sensitive Plant."

him. Therefore the kingdom of man is a devastated kingdom, because he is a discrowned king; or in the language of Isaiah, "the earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof." Man's moral disease has permeated the material universe; or as St. Paul says, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." Man's moral regeneration will permeate the material universe, and issue in its remaking.

Turning to the Book of Psalms, that wonderful literature of Hebrew expectation and hope and confidence, we hear one of the singers of Israel as he first inquires—

> What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

And then, as in harmony with the original story of creation, he declares—

> Thou hast put all things under his feet:
> All sheep and oxen,
> Yea, and the beasts of the field;
> The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
> Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

We pass to the New Testament, and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, a logician as well as a poet, declares, after quoting from the singer of Israel, that all the Divine intention is seen realised in Christ as representative Man. "Now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." He thus affirms that while all things are not yet seen under the perfect dominion of man, Jesus is seen, the risen Christ, and the vision of Him is the assurance that the whole creation will yet be redeemed from its groaning and travailing in pain, and realise the fulness of its beauty and glory.

> Perfect I call Thy plan:
> Thanks that I was a man!
> Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do![1]

[1] R. Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

The Crowned Saviour.

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THE CROWNED SAVIOUR.

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.—xvi. 19.

How strangely calm and brief is this record of so stupendous an event! Do these sparing and reverent words sound like the product of devout imagination, embellishing with legend the facts of history? Their very restrainedness, calmness, matter-of-factness, if we may so call it, is a strong guarantee that they are the utterance of an eye-witness, who verily saw what he tells so simply. There is something sublime in the contrast between the magnificence and almost inconceivable grandeur of the thing communicated, and the quiet words, so few, so sober, so wanting in all detail, in which it is told. That stupendous fact of Christ sitting at the right hand of God is the one which should fill the present for us all. Even as the Cross should fill the past, and the coming for Judgment should fill the future, so for us the one central thought about the present, in its loftiest relations, should be the throned Christ at God's right hand. It is that thought of the session of Jesus by the side of the Majesty of the Heavens that brings out the profound teaching of the Ascension, and the practical lessons which it suggests.

The story of the Ascension of Jesus is given three times in the New Testament. It is given in the verse of the text (if the last eleven verses formed no part of the original Gospel by St. Mark, they still contain a very early testimony to the current belief of the primitive Church); it is given very briefly in the concluding verses of St. Luke's Gospel; and it is given once again by St. Luke with more circumstantiality and detail in the opening chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. All three accounts are marked by a certain reticence and reverent

brevity. The sacred writer is content to mention the event in the simplest language and with a complete absence of detail.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that our belief in the Ascension rests upon such a slender foundation as a twofold mention by St. Luke (who was probably not a personal disciple of Christ, and therefore not an eye-witness) and an anonymous paragraph appended to the Gospel of St. Mark. The Ascension of Christ occupies an important place in the apostolic testimony. It is quite true it is not emphasised as is the fact of the Resurrection. But it is presupposed and taken for granted. The Resurrection, as the Apostles thought of it, *involved the Ascension.* The one, so to speak, was necessitated by the other. Christ to them was not risen simply, but also exalted and glorified.

The Ascension of Jesus occupies much the same place in the apostolic testimony as does the doctrine of the Incarnation. It cannot be said that the doctrine of the Incarnation is anywhere formally stated and logically proved. It is taken for granted. It is the background of all the apostolic thinking. The story of our Lord's sinless life, His death and resurrection, seemed to the Apostles to involve the doctrine of the Incarnation, and so it is presupposed, it is treated as an axiom, and the references to it are incidental merely. And it is much the same with the Ascension. It is never formally stated and proved. It is taken for granted. It is regarded as axiomatic. It is a corollary of the Resurrection. Hence the references to it in the Epistles are casual and incidental only.

And yet no one can read the Epistles without seeing that the Ascension coloured all the Apostles' thought of Jesus. When they speak of Him, they speak of Him as One who has passed out of the region of the seen and natural into the region of the unseen and the supernatural. They think of Him not as risen simply, but as ascended also. It was from heaven Christ appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus. Paul speaks of Christ as seated on the right hand of God. It is from heaven, according to Paul, that Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead. Peter speaks of Christ as having gone into heaven and being on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him. John, when unveiling the

splendours of the new Jerusalem, says that in the city, in the midst of it, he saw one like unto the Son of Man whose eyes were as a flame of fire and His voice as the voice of many waters, and His countenance as the sun shining in his strength, and He said, "I am the First and the Last and the Living One, and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." The picture of Jesus which the Apostles give us is that of One who lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, rose on the third day, and who then ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.

The text falls into three natural divisions :—

I. The Parting Words of Jesus—"After he had spoken unto them."

II. His Ascension—"He was received up into heaven."

III. His Session in Heaven—"He sat down at the right hand of God."

I.

The Parting Words of Jesus.

1. As the fact of Christ's resurrection is so important we may expect to find it well established. It is so. He made many appearances. There are at least ten or eleven. There is one noteworthy fact about these manifestations. *He appeared only to His friends.*

¶ To see Jesus you must be in sympathy with Jesus. The stained-glass window gives no sign of its beauty as you look at it from without. It is from within the building that you are able to enjoy the fulness and richness of the colour. It is not until you enter into the Christian temper that you can receive the Christian revelations. To the unspiritual, manifestations of the Spirit are but foolishness.

2. Now in the appearances of Jesus *He spoke* to His disciples. "After he had spoken unto them" He ascended. He might have appeared without speaking. He might have shown them His hands, His feet, His side, and so proved His identity; and He might have done this without uttering a syllable. He spoke to them. What did He say? He knew He was soon to

depart unto the Father. If the "tongues of dying men enforce attention," we may conclude that the words of the risen Christ must be of paramount importance. Let us listen to the great resurrection words.

(1) *Mary!*—"Now when he was risen he appeared *first* to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils" (Mark xvi. 9). She had been to the sepulchre and found it empty. She was sorrowfully departing when she met her Lord. "Supposing him to be the gardener, she saith unto him, Tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She saith unto him, Rabboni." The first resurrection word was a personal word; it was a woman's name addressed to the woman herself.

¶ What power Christ put into one word! The human voice is wonderfully musical. God has filled creation with music. The birds carol, the brooks murmur, the trees sing in the breeze. The ocean is always in tune. When the storm whips the billow into foam, or when the waves ripple idly on the sand, the voice of the ocean is always full of music. But nothing in creation can really rival the human voice. There are instruments of music which are pleasant to the ear; but for pathos, for power, for compass, for sweetness, the organ of human speech is above all.

(2) *All hail!*—This was the second word of the risen Lord. It was spoken to a company of sorrowing women. They had been to the sepulchre, carrying spices to embalm His body. There they had seen a vision of angels, and had been instructed by one of them to bear the intelligence of Christ's resurrection to the disciples. While they were hastening to fulfil this commission, Jesus Himself met them, saying, "All hail!" Jesus always meets His people in the path of obedience. Now the Greek word for "All hail" means simply "Rejoice." The second great resurrection word is a word of joy.

¶ *Rejoice because I live.*—They thought Him dead. They had no expectation of His resurrection. They came to anoint a dead body and met a living Saviour. The cross had been the grave of their expectations. He whom they expected to reign had died a felon's death. But now Jesus meets them. A living Lord bids them rejoice—rejoice that He *is* alive.

He lives, the friend of sinners lives,
What joy this blest assurance gives.

¶ *Rejoice because I show you what death is.*—He was "first-born from the dead." He was the "first-fruits" of the resurrection. His was the first real resurrection. We do not forget those raised by Elijah and Elisha, and the three whom Jesus Himself raised from the dead. But they were not instances of resurrection but of resuscitation. Each of them had to die again. Christ, raised from the dead, "dieth no more." "He is alive for evermore." By His resurrection "he brought life and immortality *to light.*"

¶ *Rejoice because I have triumphed.*—"He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." One work of the devil was death. St. Paul tells us "Christ hath abolished death." How did He accomplish this, but by His resurrection from the dead? He was not imprisoned for long. Like a mighty Samson He bore the gates away, and now the gates of death shall not prevail against us.

(3) *Peace!*—This is one of the most prominent of the resurrection words. It was spoken to the disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem. It was the very word they needed, for they were full of distress and fear. The peace He gave was a peace well based. He was Himself not only their source of peace, He was their peace.

¶ Peace is always based on a feeling of safety. The boy who feels safe because he trusts the wisdom of his father, does not grow uneasy though the way be unknown and the night dark. He feels safe with his father and has peace. The old man who rides in his carriage has peace, because he trusts his coachman who has driven him for years. His sense of security gives him peace. The captain has no fear for his vessel though the fog is dense. The pilot who stands on the bridge has brought his boat to port so often that he can trust him and so has peace. It was so with the disciples. The knowledge that they were not alone, that He upon whose guidance they had depended was still with them, and was to be ever with them, this was the ground of their peace.

(4) *Go!*—"Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." The meeting in Galilee was always thrown into prominence. Galilee is the appointed meeting-place for the great revelation Jesus gave of Himself. What shall the great word be for this occasion? He has spoken a personal word, a word of joy, a word of peace; now He gives the word of command. "Go!" "Then they went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. . . . And Jesus

came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go* ye therefore, and teach all nations."

¶ A living Christ means a *going* Church. And so we leave these four great resurrection words. Christ is risen! The risen Christ speaks! He speaks to *call* us, to *cheer* us, to *comfort* us, to *command* us. "After he had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And now from the throne He speaks similar words to us. Let us listen to the living Christ.[1]

3. These treasured words, which may be called the "resurrection words," remind us of the great truth which we are taught in this verse,—which means so much to us, that Jesus spoke to His disciples, before He left them. And on the day of His Ascension they would remember above all the promise which He gave them before His death: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am ye may be also" (John xiv. 3).

The world has not seen the last of Jesus Christ. Such an Ascension, after such a life, cannot be the end of Him. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment, so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." As inevitably as for sinful human nature follows death, so inevitably for the sinless Man, who is the sacrifice for the world's sins, will His judicial return follow His atoning work; He will come again, having received the Kingdom, to take account of His servants, and to perfect their possession of the salvation which by His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, He wrought for the world. Therefore, one sweet face, and one great fact—the face of the Christ, the fact of the Cross—should fill the past. One sweet face, one great fact—the face of the Christ, the fact of His presence with us all the days—should fill the present. One regal face, one great hope, should fill the future; the face of the King that sitteth upon the throne, the hope that He will come again, and "so shall we ever be with the Lord."

¶ The Apostles were bidden by angels to turn their gaze from heaven to earth,—and wait. "And they returned to Jerusalem

[1] W. L. Mackenzie.

with great joy." Yes, Jesus will come again, there is joy in that thought. He hath passed from us into that invisible world, and left an ever-widening circle on the surface of the deep, which extends ever more and more around where He has passed, till it hath filled all time and space, and hath come even to us, and taken us into its hallowed circumference.[1]

But, Lord, to-morrow,
What of to-morrow, Lord?
Shall there be rest from toil, be truce from sorrow,
Be living green upon the sward,
Now but a barren grave to me,
Be joy for sorrow?—
"Did I not die for thee?
Do I not live for thee?—leave Me to-morrow."[2]

II.

His Ascension.

1. *The Ascension was a natural sequence of the Incarnation and Resurrection.*

The Ascension of Jesus of Nazareth was the final crisis in His great work. To omit it would be to omit that which is a necessary link between His resurrection from among the dead and reappearance amid His disciples, and the coming of God, the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost. It is not easy to follow Him as He passes out of human sight. This difficulty is recognised inferentially in the very brevity of the Gospel narrative. Very little is said, because little can be said which could be understood by those dwelling still within the limitations of the material, and having consciousness of the spiritual world only by faith. Still the positive fact is definitely stated; and, following closely the lines laid down, we may reverently attempt their projection beyond the veil of time and sense. It is almost pathetic that it is necessary to pause one moment to insist upon the actual historic fact of the ascension into the heavenly places of the Man of Nazareth. If the resurrection be denied, then of course there is no room for the ascension. If on the other hand it be established that Jesus of Nazareth did indeed rise from the

[1] Isaac Williams. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

dead, then it is equally certain that He ascended into heaven. No time need be taken in argument with such as believe in the authenticity of the New Testament story, and with those who question this, argument is useless. That there is an unconscious questioning of the fact of the ascension is evident from the way in which reference is sometimes made to the Lord Jesus. It is by no means uncommon to hear persons speak of what He did or said "in the days of His Incarnation." Such a phrase, even when not used with such intention, does infer that the days of His Incarnation are over. This, however, is not so. Jesus, through whom, and through whom alone eventually, men as such will be found in the heavens, ascended in bodily form to those heavens, being Himself as to actual victory First-born from the dead. The stoop of God to human form was not for a period merely. That humiliation was a process in the pathway by which God would lift into eternal union with Himself all such as should be redeemed by the victory won through suffering. For evermore in the Person of the Man of Nazareth God is one with men. At this moment the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God, is at the right hand of the Father. Difficulties arising concerning these clear declarations as to the ascension of the Man of Nazareth must not be allowed to create disbelief in them. Any such process of discrediting what is hard to understand issues finally in the abandonment of the whole Christian position and history.

¶ The Ascension of Christ ensues just as necessarily and naturally as the development of the flower when plant, stalk, leaf, and bud are already in existence. Look at the connection of His whole career, how He was sent down from His Father, in order, as God-man, to fulfil His work of mediation and redemption; how He, obeying, suffering, and dying, really did fulfil it, thus perfectly discharging the commission intrusted to Him; and then judge whether it may not be confidently expected that the holy, righteous Father in heaven would set His seal to the finished work of His only-begotten Son, not only by raising Him again from the dead, but by causing Him also to return in visible triumph to heaven, whence He had descended to us. One step in the life of Jesus demanded and required the next. Without the Ascension His life were a torso, a fragment, an inexplicable enigma. For where could the risen Saviour have remained if He had not returned to His Father? He must necessarily have tarried

somewhere on earth in His glorified body; or, what is still more inconceivable and contradictory, have died a second time under circumstances that precluded any eye from witnessing it. But, finally, fix your attention upon that which, as being of paramount importance, imperatively challenges it, the authoritative seal of historical truth which He affixed Himself, in the presence of the whole world, upon the fact of His Ascension, by the outpouring, on the tenth day after His return to heaven, of the promised Holy Ghost. If anything be fitted to remove our last doubt, it is the day of Pentecost.[1]

2. *The Ascension was expedient for us.*

When Christ left the earth He was not bereaving His people. He was depriving them of a lesser good in order to bestow upon them a richer and a nobler. We have that on His own plain and unequivocal assurance. On the night in which He was betrayed, when He was gathered with His disciples in the upper room, and when the shadow of the coming parting lay dark and heavy across His soul and theirs, He sought to cheer His fainting and broken-hearted followers by assuring them that it was for their good that He should leave them. "Nevertheless," He said, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient *for you* that I go away." Now our Lord spoke many a hard saying during the years of His earthly sojourn, but He spoke none harder to believe than that. Those disciples of His that night absolutely and utterly refused to believe it. Yes, Christ spoke that night to deaf ears and incredulous hearts. If He had said, "It is expedient for the angelic host," who had missed the face of their blessed Lord for three and thirty years, they could have understood that. If he had said, "It is expedient for the saved and redeemed," whose joy would be increased by their Redeemer's presence, they could have understood that. If He had said, "It is expedient for Me to go away," to leave the trials and tears and difficulties and struggles and poverty and pain of earth for the blessedness and glory of heaven, they could have understood that. But that it should be expedient for *them* to be deprived of their Lord, who had been their joy, their strength, their inspiration, their hope; expedient for *them* to be deprived of His presence, and to be left friendless and alone in the midst of foes, like sheep in the midst of

[1] F. W. Krummacher.

wolves—no, they could not understand that. Their Lord's words sounded to them like bitter irony. It was a hard saying, and they could not bear it. And yet we can see to-day, and these very disciples came themselves to see, that when Christ said, "It is expedient for you that I go away," He spoke the literal truth. For wherein does that expediency consist? It consists in *the universal presence of Christ.* Christ went away from His disciples in order that—paradoxical as it may sound—He might come nearer to them. He left them in bodily presence, that spiritually He might be present with them everywhere and at all times.

¶ There are times when we wish we had shared in the experience of the first disciples, and had been privileged to hear our Lord's voice and see His face and feel His touch. The sentiment expressed in our children's hymn is at one time and another the sentiment of all of us—

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said
"Let the little ones come unto Me."

And yet, natural though the sentiment of that hymn is, it is false. Why this pensive longing, this wistful regret for the days of Christ's earthly sojourn? Is it that Christ is beyond our reach and call and touch to-day? As a matter of fact He has come nearer to us by going away.[1]

Lo, as some bard on isles of the Ægean,
Lovely and eager when the earth was young,
Burning to hurl his heart into a pæan,
Praise of the hero from whose loins he sprung;—

He, I suppose, with such a care to carry,
Wandered disconsolate and waited long,
Smiting his breast, wherein the notes would tarry,
Chiding the slumber of the seed of song:

Then in the sudden glory of a minute
Airy and excellent the proem came,
Rending his bosom, for a god was in it,
Waking the seed, for it had burst in flame.

[1] J. D. Jones.

So even I athirst for his inspiring,
I who have talked with him forget again;
Yes, many days with sobs and with desiring
Offer to God a patience and a pain;

Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,
Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of His possession,
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.[1]

3. *What is the practical bearing of the Ascension on our lives?*

Our Lord's Ascension leads us to think of Him and to follow Him in mind and heart. By His rising from the dead and ascending into heaven He gave us a model to follow no less than by His suffering and death. By His ascension our Lord would show us that although we are in the world we should not be of the world, that our minds and thoughts should be directed heavenward. There lie the vast possibilities, the unthinkable future, for human nature. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Union and communion with God. This is the beginning, the middle, the end of our religion. For this is the purpose of God for each soul in the day when He creates it.

¶ Let us meditate how Christ has gone before us into the glory of His heavenly Father. Therefore, if we desire to follow Him, we must mark the way which He has shown us, and trodden for three and thirty years, in misery, in poverty, in shame, and in bitterness, even unto death. So likewise, to this day, must we follow in the same path, if we would fain enter with Him into the Kingdom of Heaven. For though all our masters were dead, and all our books burned, yet we should ever find instruction enough in His holy life. For He Himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and by no other way can we truly and undeviatingly advance towards the same consummation, than in that which He hath walked while He was yet upon earth. Now, as the loadstone draws the iron after itself, so doth Christ draw all hearts after Himself which have once been touched by Him; and as when the iron is impregnated with the energy of the loadstone that has touched it, it follows the stone uphill although that is contrary to its nature, and cannot rest in its own proper place, but strives to rise above itself on high; so all the souls which have been

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

touched by this loadstone, Christ, can be chained down neither by joy nor by grief, but are ever rising up to God out of themselves. They forget their own nature, and follow after the touch of God, and follow it the more easily and directly, the more noble is their nature than that of other men, and the more they are touched by God's image.[1]

Since Eden, it keeps the secret!
Not a flower beside it knows
To distil from the day the fragrance
And beauty that flood the Rose.

Silently speeds the secret
From the loving eye of the sun
To the willing heart of the flower:
The life of the twain is one.

Folded within my being,
A wonder to me is taught,
Too deep for curious seeing
Or fathom of sounding thought,

Of all sweet mysteries holiest!
Faded are rose and sun!
The Highest hides in the lowliest;
My Father and I are one.[2]

III.

His Session at God's Right Hand.

1. In that solemn and wondrous fact of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God we see *the exalted Man.* We are taught to believe, according to His own words, that in His ascension Christ was but returning whence He came, and entering into the "glory which he had with the Father before the world was." And that impression of a return to His native and proper abode is strongly conveyed to us by the narrative of His ascension. Contrast it, for instance, with the narrative of Elijah's rapture, or with the brief reference to Enoch's translation. The one was

[1] *Tauler's Life and Sermons*, 335.
[2] Charles Gordon Ames.

taken by God up into a region and a state which he had not formerly traversed; the other was borne by a fiery chariot to the heavens; but Christ slowly sailed upwards, as it were, by His own inherent power, returning to His abode, and ascending up where He was before.

But whilst this is one side of the profound fact, there is another side. What was new in Christ's return to His Father's bosom? This, that he took His manhood with Him. It was "the Everlasting Son of the Father," the Eternal Word, which from the beginning "was with God and was God," that came down from heaven to earth, to declare the Father; but it was the Incarnate Word, the Man Christ Jesus, that went back again. This most blessed and wonderful truth is taught with emphasis in His own words before the Council, "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." Christ, then, to-day, bears a human body, not indeed the "body of his humiliation," but the body of His glory, which is none the less a true corporeal frame, and necessarily requires a locality. His ascension, whithersoever He may have gone, was the true carrying of a real humanity, complete in all its parts, Body, Soul, and Spirit, up to the very throne of God. Where that locality is it is useless to speculate. St. Paul says that He ascended up "far above all heavens"; or, as the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, in the proper translation, the High Priest "is passed *through* the heavens," as if all this visible material creation was rent asunder in order that He might soar yet higher beyond its limits wherein reign mutation and decay. But wheresoever that place may be, there *is* a place in which now, with a human body as well as a human spirit, Jesus is sitting "at the right hand of God." In the profound language of Scripture, "The Forerunner is for us entered." In some mysterious manner, of which we can but dimly conceive, that entrance of Jesus in His complete humanity into the highest heavens is the preparation of a place for us. It seems as if, without His presence there, there were no entrance for human nature within that state, and no power in a human foot to tread upon the crystal pavements of the Celestial City. But where He is, there the path is permeable, and the place native, to all who love and trust Him.

¶ The exalted Man, sitting at the right hand of God, is the Pattern of what is possible for humanity, and the prophecy and pledge of what will be actual for all that love Him and bear the image of Him upon earth, that they may be conformed to the image of His glory, and be with Him where He is. What firmness, what reality, what solidity this thought of the exalted bodily Christ gives to the else dim and vague conceptions of a Heaven beyond the stars and beyond our present experience! I believe that no doctrine of a future life has strength and substance enough to survive the agonies of our hearts when we part from our dear ones—the fears of our spirits when we look into the unknown inane future for ourselves—except only this which says Heaven is Christ and Christ is Heaven, and points to Him and says, "Where he is, there also shall his servants be."[1]

We know not when, we know not where,
  We know not what that world will be;
But this we know—it will be fair
    To see.

With hearts athirst and thirsty face,
  We know and know not what shall be:
Christ Jesus bring us of His grace
    To see.

Christ Jesus bring us of His grace,
  Beyond all prayers our hope can pray,
One day to see Him face to Face,
    One day.[2]

2. The Ascension of our blessed Lord involves *the glorification of the whole human race.* In His Incarnation Christ identified Himself once for all with human-kind. He bound us in a close and vital relationship to Himself. He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He shared our lot and made us partakers of His destiny. The highest interests of humanity became embodied in Him. If the powers of evil could prevail over Him, then they might soon enslave the whole human race. If He should overcome death, and pass through the grave and the gate of death to a joyful resurrection, He would thus open to all mankind the gate of everlasting life. If God should exalt Him with great triumph unto His Kingdom in heaven, He would by that same act exalt all His faithful followers to the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

Thou hast raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand;
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Thee in glory stand.

Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension
We by faith behold our own.[1]

3. Christ's sitting at the right hand of God presents to our view *a Saviour at Rest.* That session expresses the idea of absolute repose after sore conflict. It is the same thought that is expressed in those solemn Egyptian colossal statues of deified conquerors, elevated to mysterious union with their gods, and yet men still. Sitting before their temples in perfect stillness, with their mighty hands lying quiet on their restful limbs; with calm faces out of which toil and passion and change seem to have melted, they gaze out with open eyes as over a silent, prostrate world. So, with the Cross behind, with all the agony and weariness of the arena, the dust and the blood of the struggle left beneath, Christ "sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." He rests after His Cross, not because He needed repose even after that terrible effort, but in token that His work was finished and perfected, that all which He had come to do was done; and in token that the Father, too, beheld and accepted His finished work. Therefore, the session of Christ at the right hand of God is the proclamation from Heaven of what He cried with His last dying breath upon the Cross: "It is finished!" It is the declaration that the world has had all done for it that Heaven can do for it. It is the declaration that all which is needed for the regeneration of humanity has been lodged in the very heart of the race, and that henceforward all that is required is the evolving and the development of the consequences of that perfect work which Christ offered upon the Cross. So the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts the priests who stood "daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices" which "can never take away sin," with "this Man who, after he had offered one

[1] Chr. Wordsworth.

sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God"; testifying thereby that His Cross is the complete, sufficient, perpetual atonement and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

¶ It would seem as though one could hear the antiphonal singing of the heavenly choirs, as this perfect One passes into heaven.

> Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
> And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors:
> And the King of glory shall come in,

is the exulting challenge of the angels escorting Him. To this comes back the question, inspired by the passion to hear again the story of the victory,

> Who is the King of glory?

And yet gathering new music and new meaning the surging anthem rolls,

> Jehovah strong and mighty,
> Jehovah mighty in battle . . .
> He is the King of glory.

Thus the song is also of One who was mighty in battle. Looking upon Him, the glorified One, and listening to His words, the wonder grows. For in that Form, all filled with exquisite beauty, are yet the signs of suffering and of pain. The marks of wounding are in hands, and feet, and side, and His presence declares in His own words, "I am . . . the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."[1]

> Chains of my heart, avaunt I say—
> I will arise, and in the strength of love
> Pursue the bright track ere it fade away,
> My Saviour's pathway to His home above.
>
> Sure, when I reach the point where earth
> Melts into nothing from th' uncumbered sight,
> Heaven will o'ercome th' attraction of my birth,
> And I will sink in yonder sea of light:
>
> Till resting by th' incarnate Lord,
> Once bleeding, now triumphant for my sake,
> I mark Him, how by Seraph hosts adored
> He to earth's lowest cares is still awake.

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

The sun and every vassal star,
All space, beyond the soar of Angel wings,
Wait on His word; and yet He stays His car
For every sigh a contrite suppliant brings.

He listens to the silent tear
'Mid all the anthems of the boundless sky—
And shall our dreams of music bar our ear
To His soul-piercing voice for ever nigh?

Nay, gracious Saviour,—but as now
Our thoughts have traced Thee to Thy glory-throne,
So help us evermore with Thee to bow
Where human sorrow breathes her lowly moan.[1]

4. *The Session involves Intercession.*—In the Epistle to the Hebrews is constantly reiterated the thought that we have a Priest who has "passed into the heavens," there to "appear in the presence of God for us." And St. Paul says, "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34). There are deep mysteries connected with the thought of the intercession of Christ. It does not mean that the Divine Heart needs to be won to love and pity. It does not mean that in any mere outward and formal fashion Christ pleads with God, and softens and placates the Infinite and Eternal love of the Father in the heavens. It, at least, plainly means this, that He, our Saviour and Sacrifice, is for ever in the presence of God, presenting His own blood as an element in the Divine dealing with us, modifying the incidence of the Divine law, and securing through His own merits and intercession the outflow of blessings upon our heads and hearts. It is not a complete statement of Christ's work for us that He died for us; He died that He might have somewhat to offer. He lives that He may be our Advocate as well as our propitiation with the Father. The High Priest once a year passed within the curtain, and there in the solemn silence and solitude of the Holy Place, not without trembling, sprinkled the blood that he bore thither; and but for a moment was he permitted to stay in the awful Presence. So, but in reality and for ever,

[1] J. Keble, *The Christian Year*, Ascension Day.

with the joyful gladness of a Son in His "own calm home, His habitation from eternity," Christ *abides* in the Holy Place; and, at the right hand of the Majesty of the Heavens, lifts up that prayer, so strangely compact of authority and submission: "Father, I *will* that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." The Son of Man at the right hand of God is our Intercessor with the Father. "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed through the heavens, let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace."

Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,
Neither forgetful that we are but dust,
Not as from heavens too high for our upreaching,
Coldly sublime, intolerably just:—

Nay but Thou knewest us, Lord Christ Thou knowest,
Well Thou rememberest our feeble frame,
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest
Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame.

Therefore have pity!—not that we accuse Thee,
Curse Thee and die and charge Thee with our woe:
Not thro' Thy fault, O Holy One, we lose Thee,
Nay, but our own,—yet hast Thou made us so!

Then tho' our foul and limitless transgression
Grows with our growing, with our breath began,
Raise Thou the arms of endless intercession,
Jesus, divinest when Thou most art man![1]

5. Lastly, the Ascension sets before us *the ever-active Helper*. The "right hand of God" is the Omnipotent energy of God; and however certainly the language of Scripture requires for its full interpretation that we should firmly hold that Christ's glorified body dwells in a place, we are not to omit the other thought that to sit at the right hand also means to wield the immortal energy of that Divine nature over all the field of the Creation, and in every province of His dominion. So that the ascended Christ is the ubiquitous Christ; and He who is "at the right hand of God" is wherever the power of God reaches throughout His whole Universe.

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

¶ We remember that it was once given to a man to look through the opened heavens (through which Christ had "passed") and to "see the Son of Man standing"—not sitting—"at the right hand of God." Why to the dying protomartyr was there granted that vision thus varied? Wherefore was the attitude changed but to express the swiftness, the certainty of His help, and the eager readiness of the Lord, who starts to His feet, as it were, to succour and to sustain His dying servant? And so we may take that great joyful truth that, both as receiving "gifts for men" and bestowing gifts upon them, and as working by His providence in the world, and on the wider scale for the well-being of His children and of the Church, the Christ who sits at the right hand of God wields, ever with eager cheerfulness, all the powers of omnipotence for our well-being, if we love and trust Him.[1]

And didst Thou love the race that loved not Thee,
  And didst Thou take to Heaven a human brow?
Dost plead with man's voice by the marvellous sea?
  Art Thou his kinsman now?

O God, O Kinsman, loved, but not enough!
  O man, with eyes majestic after death,
Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,
  Whose lips drawn human breath!

By that one likeness which is ours and Thine,
  By that one nature which doth hold us kin,
By that high heaven where sinless Thou dost shine,
  To draw us sinners in,

By Thy last silence in the judgment-hall,
  By long foreknowledge of the deadly tree,
By darkness, by the wormwood and the gall,
  I pray Thee visit me.

Come, lest this heart should, cold and cast away,
  Die ere the guest adored she entertain—
Lest eyes which never saw Thine earthly day
  Should miss Thy heavenly reign.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Jean Ingelow.

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